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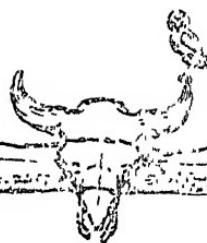






George W. Littlefield  
*Texan*





GEORGE W.  
LITTLEFIELD  
*Texan*

BY J. EVETTS HALEY



DRAWINGS BY  
HAROLD D. BUGBEE

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*To Sons of the Old South,  
Builders of the New Southwest  
—Littlefield Co-workers  
and Contemporaries*



## *To Whom the Credit*

The history of Texas that we like to recall is primarily the story of vigorous men impelled by strong wills and sustained by brave hearts to carry their aspirations, ideals, and convictions to positive ends. The life of George W. Littlefield, southern planter, Texas trail driver, western ranchman, and Austin banker is a part of that tradition. All attempts to disparage its sturdy self-reliance and dynamic nature may be dissipated by the tragic realities of our day. Perhaps again the man who, in freedom, can battle and survive, plan and perform, aspire and achieve, may be tolerated and, at last, even admired. This is not to exalt too much the men of yesterday. Few were exactly angels in their way, but in extenuation it may be said that the world is still slightly short of heaven.

No one can better judge the shortcomings of his work than the author, himself, who approaches his subject with proper humility. If even reasonably honest, he does not imagine that he has told the whole story, nor infallibly interpreted the facts that underlie it. He may not fail to call a spade a spade, but, given perspective and a sense of decency, he will not use that instrument to dig up muck simply for the morbid satisfaction of perverted tastes. The biogra-

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pher is limited not only by his own shortcomings but by the scope of his materials.

Littlefield was a man of action who left a meager record of his own extensive work while doing more than anyone else in the South to preserve the records of others—the culture of his own land. If his trail at times grows dim across the verbal patchwork of his period, the fault may perhaps be laid to a simple lack of evidence as to the exact part he took in some of the events which he helped to bring about. Since this writer still aspires to the standards of history instead of romance, he cannot altogether reconstruct the story where the facts do not suggest the plot.

Ten years ago, however, at the suggestion of Dr. E. C. Barker, of the University of Texas, I picked up the thread of this vigorous Texan's story. Even prior to that, through his nephew, J. Phelps White, of Roswell, New Mexico, and other old-timers on the Staked Plains, I had absorbed something of the background of the Littlefield ranches. At the instance of the Trustees of the Littlefield Fund for Southern History, at the University of Texas, I pursued the study further. This is an attempt, through the extensive use of oral sources, to suggest the nature and extent of Littlefield's various and remarkably successful ventures on the ranges of grass. The verdant memories of stable and unhurried Texans have been my chief resort.

The J. Phelps White family has turned over its record books of the Yellowhouse Ranch, and invested its interest, anecdotes and suggestions in this book. From the eighty-year-old Walker "boys"—LFD cowpunchers on the bitter Pecos—and other Walker relatives of Major Littlefield on the gentle Guadalupe, I have sought further fact and atmosphere. Through M. H. Dowell, of Luling, Texas, I have enjoyed the generous and unrestricted use of a great bundle of

TO WHOM THE CREDIT

letters from Major Littlefield to Mr. Dowell's parents, written between 1868 and 1920. Additional details relating to the later period have been added by the late Mr. H. A. Wroe and other relatives of Major Littlefield, now living in Austin. Most fortunately, Miss Ruth Key, one of the legatees of the Littlefield Estate, rescued a brief, scribbled, but uncompleted autobiography that lay, at his death, on Major Littlefield's littered desk. My uncatalogued obligations extend to a multitude of others.

Among those whom I should not forget is Harrison McClure, former slave, completely loyal to the Littlefield name and the good rich soil of Gonzales County. In his humble but independent shack hidden among the mesquites of the land he loved, I reconstructed something of the Littlefield plantation life. Traveling with me upon many trips to catch these flying memories *verbatim* was that devoted helper, Brockman Horne. Later, from pure love of the chase, that able, modest and sensitive student of Texas history, Hervey Chesley, of Hamilton, helped trail down many a man and transcribed reams of recollections to supplement my own notes. With equal appreciation, H. D. Bugbee, adopted Texan, thorough westerner, delightful companion and adept artist, has made this book attractive. My obligation to that great student and man, Dr. E. C. Barker, is cumulative with time. The few passing moments of peace and quiet that may have contributed to this work were wrested for me from these tumultuous times by my wife, who, somehow, happily, makes my fortunes her own.

J. EVETTS HALEY

*JH Ranch*

*Spearman, Texas*

*June 15, 1943*



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HB

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE SOUTHERN TRADITION

GEORGE WASHINGTON LITTLEFIELD was a product, even more than most men are, of his time, soil, and circumstances. He was an intent, practical man, of driving and determined purpose. Childless, yet with a keen sense of family responsibility, he was, in effect, foster-father to a multitude of kinsfolk. He was an unusual cowman, with many thousands of cattle upon his own ranges and money in his own bank. He was a businessman not without imagination, who not only conceived successful enterprises, but decorated his bank with bronze ropes and brands and western murals before the experts in culture discovered indigenous art. But most of all he was an unreconstructed rebel who never forgot that his deepest love was for the South—nothing was dearer to him than the cause which some have contended was lost. Though the story of the Civil War must have been close to his heart, he suffered no sentimental nostalgia for the Confederacy during his vigorous days, nor wasted time mourning a struggle that almost cost him his life, which he freely offered. He was far too practical for that.

In his later life he regularly attended the meetings of southern veterans—bearded old men, frail beneath the weight of years, but still strong in their devotion to a cause; shriveled

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and crippled old men still fired with verdant memories of Terry's immortal Texas Rangers. Year by year, as the tragedy of defeat was dulled by the rationalization that "perhaps it is better," the tattoo of their faltering canes was heard less frequently along the heat-laden avenues of Austin; and the cool, spacious depths of its principal hotel echoed but in memory to their wild rebel yells.

George W. Littlefield attended the meetings of the southern veterans where they enshrined, rather than analyzed, the amazing appeal of Jackson and the quiet genius of Lee, but he did not sit in futile lament over their defeat. Rather, when in his prosperous later years the plan was offered, he used his means and influence to lay the basis for making Texas the center of southern historical research for all time to come.

The bankers spoke of him as a cowman; the cowmen referred to him as a banker—both thereby conferring unintended compliments. For, as a successful man, either in a Yorktown saddle on the Texas range or, as Will Hogg put it, in his "saffron cage" on Congress Avenue, he burned his brands so deep that even those who ran might read. But, to begin, his story is rooted in the healthy soil of the southern earth, and the genius of the man is understandable only in relation to the genius of the land.

Littlefield was southern by long-established family tradition, and, as we like to say, "by birth and raisin'." The meager sources indicate that his grandfather was Philip Littlefield, one of three brothers who immigrated to the United States in 1801. One of these brothers stopped in Maine, another in Virginia; and the peculiar urge which is the pioneer's pushed Philip on to locate in South Carolina, to move again

to Panola County, Mississippi, and finally, in 1854, to settle down on a farm three miles south of Leesville, in Gonzales County, Texas. He was a Whig and a slave owner who voted against secession, but he supported the South and sent three sons into the army when the act was done.<sup>1</sup>

Among Philip Littlefield's six sons was a particularly vigorous one called Fleming, born in Tennessee in 1811, and reared, like the rest, to plantation life. As a young man he became an overseer, adept at handling slaves. He spent some time in middle Mississippi, lived in Arkansas a while, and then back-tracked to Panola County, to visit his parents, who still lived there, and met the woman he was to marry.

One of his brothers was overseer for Mrs. John Henry White, a widow who owned a plantation and forty slaves in Panola County. Before her marriage she was Mildred Terrell Satterwhite, born in Elbert County, Georgia, in 1812. She had married the son of Shelton White, a prominent planter, remembered at that time as "a very plain honest clever old gentleman, who had accumulated a pretty fortune." In 1835, she and her husband had moved to Panola County, Mississippi. In 1838, John Henry White had died, leaving his widow four sons and a daughter and the plantation near Como. It was there that Fleming Littlefield, while visiting his brother, met the capable and attractive widow.

And there he stayed, marrying her in 1841 in spite of the opposition of the Whites and Satterwhites—her own and her deceased husband's families. Acceptance of the situation,

<sup>1</sup> Philip Littlefield married a Miss Nance and had seven children: Andrew, Fleming, Zacharia, Perry, Robert, Philip and Caroline. He and his wife were buried on their homestead farm near Belmont, not far from Gonzales.—Frank W. Johnson, *A History of Texas and Texans* (1916), IV, 1670.

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which might have been expected after the marriage, did not follow—resignation being foreign to White and Satterwhite natures—and feeling ran high for many years. Instead of cooling with time, their enmity became the hotter, especially when Littlefield and his wife petitioned for the guardianship of that portion of the estate which fell to Mrs. Littlefield's children by her first marriage. Violence was averted then by the appointment of the oldest boy as overseer of the plantation, but “a long and bitter quarrel ensued,” which involved I. S. Satterwhite, Mrs. Littlefield's brother. For years, he and Littlefield did not speak, and Satterwhite “frequently threatened to kill . . . his brother in law.”

After a decade of this bad blood, Littlefield decided, in 1850, to move to Gonzales County, Texas, and held an auction at the plantation to dispose of the things that he did not wish to keep. The Satterwhites objected, especially to his taking their sister to Texas, and to settle the feud once and for all it was claimed, they sent a man to insult him, start a fight, and kill him. The fighter met Littlefield on the porch of his home and spat in his face, but was too slow in pulling his gun. Littlefield killed him. Then, perhaps not guilty of a crime in the eyes of the law, but feeling that he would be subjected to persecution by his wife's family, he jumped on his horse and, telling his family to follow when they could, left his Mississippi troubles behind and joined that vigorous and lusty breed that was headed West. As night fell like an uncertain shadow over their future, Mrs. Littlefield and her children dragged brush through the welcome darkness to erase the trail that fiery Fleming Littlefield had left in his flight for Texas.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Greenville S. Dowell, Manuscript, “Autobiography,” 215-27, in

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In the fall of 1850, Fleming Littlefield located upon the peaceful Guadalupe River, fifteen miles above Gonzales, and began farming several hundred acres of rich bottom land. There he was joined by his wife and family and by one of his stepsons, Tom J. White, who would not think of letting his mother make the long trip alone.<sup>3</sup> With her were the Littlefield children—the oldest of whom was George, next was Mildred M., and the youngest was William P. Another child named Fleming had died in infancy.

George W. Littlefield was born on the plantation near Como, Mississippi, June 21, 1842. He was nine years old when he arrived in Texas, and, as schools were scarce, his father hired a tutor to train the children. George grew up in the Guadalupe bottom, where he learned to ride, fish, and hunt, and where his father acquired a considerable estate, first buying approximately fifteen hundred acres of land from John Oliver, on the west bank of the Guadalupe River, for \$6,600, and then six hundred acres more from John S. Hodges. Fleming Littlefield not only engaged in farming, but ran a "herd" of stock horses on the Sandies, to the west of Gonzales, and, in partnership with one Samuel J. Mays, opened a store in town. In January, 1853, he made a will, died of pneumonia the same month, and was buried as a Royal Arch Mason in the family cemetery on the plantation.<sup>4</sup>

hands of M. H. Dowell, Luling, Texas; *The Inquirer*, Gonzales, Texas, June 12, 1880; M. H. Dowell to J. E. H., March 24, 1937; L. E. Daniell, *Types of Successful Men of Texas*, 345; Dermot H. Hardy and Ingham S. Roberts, *Historical Review of South-East Texas*, II, 891. This story was told by John White to M. H. Dowell. Dowell to J. E. H., December 6, 1941.

<sup>3</sup> *The Inquirer*, June 12, 1880; Mrs. R. H. Walker to J. E. H., March 29, 1937; Daniell, *Men of Texas*, 345.

<sup>4</sup> Daniell, *Men of Texas*, 345; Gonzales County, *Deed Records*, Vol. H, 54-55, 203; Vol. J, 415; Vol. F2, 89-91.

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By the terms of the will, Mrs. Littlefield was named executrix and directed to sell the horses and cattle whenever she wished. The "mercantile house" in Gonzales was to be discontinued, Mays being directed to close out the business and pay the widow the \$4,000 that Littlefield had invested in it. The estate was to be equally divided between her and the children.

Mrs. Littlefield proved to be a capable businesswoman. She sued for and collected outstanding debts, conveyed enough land to her son, Thomas J. White, to set him up independently, and furnished bond for fifteen thousand dollars as guardian of another son, Charles E. White. In 1854, the estate was partitioned at her insistence, John L. Harper being named guardian for the three Littlefield minors.

The inventory of the estate listed 1,760 acres of land, 22 Negroes, 65 bales of cotton, more than 100 head of Spanish and American horses, besides mules, oxen, 300 cattle, 100 hogs, 1 Page's sawmill, 4,000 bushels of corn, 11 stacks of fodder, ox and horse wagons, 1 old carriage, 20 plows, 16 pairs of gear, farming tools, \$23 in cash, and \$1,825 in notes.

Everything except the land, which was held intact because of the difficulty of division, was partitioned. One-fourth of the estate, to the value of \$5,785, went to each member of the family. George received four mules named Jack, Lagan, Harry, and Pall; eight horses and colts, among them Simon, Prince, and Black Hawk; and five slaves--Byatt, valued at \$1,000, George at \$1,050, Jack at \$700, Frank at \$550, and Susan at \$900. Besides these legacies, George W. Littlefield received cattle, oxen, hogs, tools, and "the old carriage." Written upon the inventory in his mother's scrawl was this notation:

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A considerable amt of cotton has been shipped, but I cannot at present, ascertain the amt of money which will be realized, & I know not but that most of his [Fleming Littlefield's] sales has been applied to liquidation of debt—The goods in the store & the profits of the establishment I cannot inventory, and that whole matter has been left with Mr Mays, and when the business of the establishment is closed, I will inventory whatever sum of money that may be coming from that source—also I will when ascertained inventory the monies which may be hereafter rec'd on sales of cotton in Orleans.<sup>5</sup>

Thus rested the family estate in 1854, divided among the children, but still under the watchful eye of Mrs. Littlefield.

Other members of the Littlefield family moved to Texas and settled nearby. These included George's grandfather, Philip Littlefield, who left Mississippi in 1854 with his large family and settled near Gonzales. Since Mrs. Littlefield was matriarchal in spirit and took pride in having her family around her, their presence must have been a comfort to her as she gathered them all under her wing—a trait, incidentally, that cropped out strongly in her oldest son.

Two of Mrs. Littlefield's sons by her first marriage, Thomas and Charles White, had come to Texas with her. Thomas returned to Mississippi to claim a bride, while his mother built him a house to welcome the couple back. Her daughter, Sarah Zalinda White, after graduation from Hyer's School at Memphis in 1848, had married Dr. Greenville S. Dowell, a physician who had taken up practice in the Como country, in Mississippi. In time, she and Dr. Dowell came to

<sup>5</sup> Gonzales County, *Probate Minutes*, Vol. D, 140–42, *Probate Case Papers*, No. 293; and *District Court Journal*, Vol. A, 402–403 and 406.

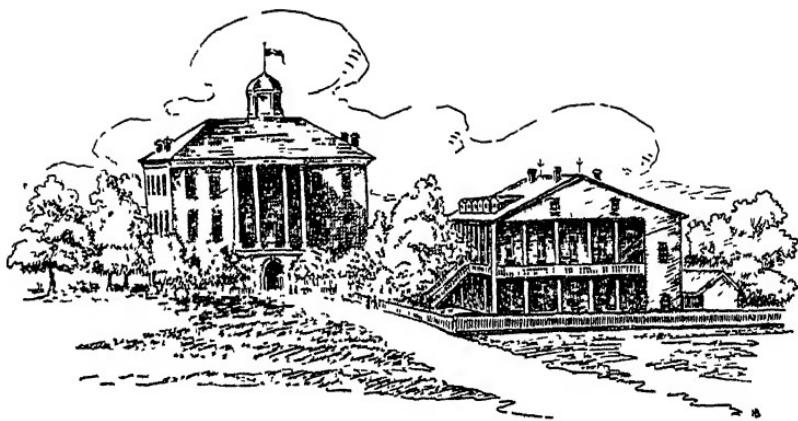
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Gonzales, too. He was a high-strung, impractical man, and their relations with the Littlefield family were unhappy, though George W. Littlefield became strongly attached to their sons and daughter, and later helped them in many ways.<sup>6</sup>

Charles White acquired a plantation on the San Marcos River, above Gonzales, not far from the Littlefield home. He was a bachelor of means, but became demented in the middle fifties, and his mother was named as his guardian. Bill Hunter, a near-by farmer, was overseer for her on the Charles White plantation until he was replaced by George Bailey, from Mississippi, a brother of Jim Bailey, who served as overseer on the original Littlefield plantation about three miles away. Later Mrs. Littlefield acquired another farm that lay in "the forks of the rivers"—the San Marcos and the Guadalupe—five miles out from Gonzales on the Belmont road.

The Littlefields had brought from Mississippi a brick-maker named Allen, who made brick on the ground for the construction of their houses and slave quarters. The plantation on the Belmont road was neatly laid out, and the slaves first brought from Mississippi were increased by those left by Charles White, and by inheritance from another member of the family in the deep South.

<sup>6</sup> Greenville S. Dowell was born in Virginia, September 1, 1822, moved to Tennessee with his father in the fall of 1835, and spent the rest of his boyhood on a plantation on the Hatchie River, three miles from Raleigh. He studied medicine at Jefferson College, in Philadelphia, made a prospecting trip to Texas in 1848, and settled to practice near Compo, Mississippi. There he became a friend of the Satterwhites and the Littlefields, married Sarah White, June 29, 1849, moved to Texas, and died at Galveston, June 9, 1881.—Greenville S. Dowell, "Autobiography," 67-119; Family Bible owned by M. H. Dowell, Luling, Texas; M. H. Dowell to J. F. H., January 12, 1939.



*Old Baylor University*

After some preliminary schooling at home and at Gonzales, George W. Littlefield entered Baylor University, at Old Independence, in February, 1857. Just what effect that stern Baptist discipline and that unimaginative academic atmosphere had upon him has not been told. He did not adhere to their institutional dogmas, nor was the breadth of his practical, imaginative genius inhibited in later life by the narrow horizons of the academic world. On the other hand, the discipline may have borne fruit, for he kept throughout his life to a rigid personal routine which, though not painted with fervent piety, left him little leisure for frivolous, if innocent, diversions. Perhaps, however, because he had so little formal education himself, and that so hardly gained, he prized education above everything else.

In October, 1858, he left school in order to assist in disposing of the estate of his half-brother, Charles E. White, in Panola County, Mississippi. He went back to Mississippi, sold the cotton crop, and converted it into Louisiana Bank bills, the only paper money in circulation there. He bought

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four wagons and four four-mule teams to use in transporting the older slaves and the children. Then, with \$4,500 in gold in a pair of old saddle bags, the seventeen-year-old boy headed his dusky caravan west through Sterling and Little Rock, Arkansas, down through Marshall, and across the state of Texas to Gonzales. Years later he recalled how the young Negroes, walking beside the wagons, made the East Texas woods ring with their happy songs, and how, after a month on the road, he delivered the property intact to his mother on the home plantation. He recalled the experience later to illustrate how different conditions became in after years, and—he proudly said—to show “the confidence existing between the slave owner and the slave in 1858.”<sup>7</sup>

At this time, even in Texas, nearly all large plantations had their horsepower cotton gins, their presses, and their gin houses, where the cotton was stored. The Littlefield staple was either sold in Gonzales or consigned by freight wagons to the coast—to Indianola or old Powderhorn—and thence to brokers in New Orleans. Corn was raised in large quantities for fattening hogs and grinding into meal, as pork and cornbread were the mainstays of plantation life.

The two Bailey brothers—the overseers—kept slave dogs, but were nevertheless remembered pleasantly by former slaves and were generally liked. Jim Bailcy was the principal overseer, for his brother, after killing a man on the Charles White farm, reversed the usual migratory trend by back-tracking to Mississippi until his brother could make amends. Jim Bailey not only had a farm of his own, but like others in the neighborhood, kept a string of race horses and enjoyed the community sport.<sup>8</sup>

The Littlefields fell heir to another group of slaves; those

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owned by Charles Satterwhite, an Alabama bachelor uncle of Mrs. Littlefield's, who died on his place between Mobile and Montgomery just before the outbreak of the Civil War. According to one of these slaves, Alf Satterwhite, a boy then and an untrustworthy source now, this inheritance consisted of fifty-seven Negroes in all. He says that Mrs. Littlefield and Jim Bailey came to Alabama after them during the war; but John Dowell, Mrs. Littlefield's grandson, writing in the Gonzales *Daily Inquirer* in 1914, said that George Littlefield and his mother made the trip before the war. At any rate, the Littlefield holdings were considerably enlarged, and under the dominant management of "Old Mis," as the Negroes affectionately called their owner, the Littlefield fortunes seemed to flourish.<sup>7</sup>

By 1860 the Littlefield properties consisted of the original plantation of Fleming Littlefield, fifteen miles up the Guadalupe from Gonzales; the Charles White farm near by; and what was then the home place, in the forks of the Guadalupe and the San Marcos rivers, five miles out from town on the Belmont road that led over the sandy ridges westward to San Antonio. There, in the brick home, moved "Old Mis" Littlefield, the efficient mistress, "too short and thick" for a southern belle, as one of her grandsons recalled, "but possessed of most fitting hands to work." According to the memories of Harrison McClure, a former slave and friend of the family, she had a quick wit and was, in his picturesque

<sup>7</sup> George W. Littlefield, Manuscript, "Autobiographical Sketch," 18-19, owned by Miss Ruth Key, Austin.

<sup>8</sup> Harrison McClure to J. E. H., September 22, 1935, and January 14, 1938; Alf Satterwhite to J. E. H., January 14, 1938; J. W. White to J. E. H., March 21, 1937.

<sup>9</sup> Gonzales *Daily Inquirer*, March 21, 1914; Alf Satterwhite to J. E. H., January 14, 1938.



*Littlefield's Mother*

phrase, "a great sighter—she could see a way off down the lane yonder. And what she told you, you'd better do it. She was awfully good to her niggers, too."

Back among the Negro quarters might have been seen two old characters who enjoyed the honors of years and the privileges of the place. One was Uncle Amos, the first slave whom Charles Satterwhite had owned—"an Alabama river . . . plantation negro . . . ignorant, good-natured, obedient, industrious and a great and willing worker in his younger days." He was tall and slim, with long arms, worn and bony hands, and hair and beard grown white. Now he

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had only one occupation and diversion combined, and that was fishing. His companion in age and honor was old Salina Satterwhite, her master's first woman slave. She rambled about the Littlefield quarters, supporting herself on a long staff grasped between twisted fingers and thumb, moving silently and slowly, much as a ghost might walk, and "about as near to death on earth as could well be . . ." Known as "Grannie Liny," she and Uncle Amos had been left by Satterwhite to Mrs. Littlefield with "the sacred injunction to take care of them as long as they lived and bury them decently when they died."<sup>10</sup> She did, for this too was a part of the southern tradition.

<sup>10</sup> Gonzales *Daily Inquirer*, March 21 and 23, 1914; Harrison McClure to J. E. H., March 25, 1937.



## INTO THE CIVIL WAR

**G**ONZALES, on the bank of the peaceful Guadalupe, has been the home of implacable warriors. From its quiet, wooded retreats came the men who fired the first shot in the Texas Revolution; out of this peaceful town, marching to bloody struggle and certain death, went the only reinforcements to relieve the Alamo; and out of this placid plantation zone went many another sturdy Texan to die in the fatal shadow of Shiloh Church, in the Civil War.

When the Civil War came on, many of her men, born to the saddle and familiar with guns, were ready to go. A company was organized immediately, and George W. Littlefield, then almost nineteen years of age but used to the estate of a man for several years past, volunteered at once.

Two months earlier, B. F. Terry, a planter of Fort Bend County, Tom Lubbock, a merchant of Houston, and John A. Wharton, a lawyer and farmer of Brazoria, while returning to their homes by stage from the Secession Convention at Austin, had dwelt at length on the affairs of the Confederacy. Their joint decision was to tender their services immediately in person at the southern capital. Terry and Lubbock traveling by land, reached Virginia in time to fall in with the forces at Manassas and emerge with valorous dis-

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tinction. Wharton left by boat for a quicker trip, was captured by the Yankees, but was released, and returned to Texas to organize a company. Terry and Lubbock came back commissioned to raise a regiment, and in August, 1861, issued a call from Houston.

Meanwhile, in May, a company of volunteers had organized at Gonzales and elected Isham G. Jones captain, Richard Harris, first lieutenant, A. D. Harris, second lieutenant, and James H. Parramore, third lieutenant. Littlefield was chosen second sergeant. They had gone into camp at Gonzales, where Terry's call reached them informing them that



"each man will be required to furnish equipment for his horse and to arm himself. The company will be transported free." They struck out for Houston, and, in the same month, were mustered into the Eighth Texas Cavalry—Terry's Texas Rangers. The war fever was high, and Terry and his men were soon headed for the front.

In November, they reported for duty to General Albert Sidney Johnston, at Bowling Green, Kentucky, where he

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was holding the western portion of the Confederate lines. Terry organized his regiment on a democratic basis, calling for an election of officers. He was chosen colonel, Lubbock, lieutenant-colonel, and Thomas Harrison, major<sup>1</sup>; and, mounted on what Littlefield proudly believed to be "the finest lot of Horses furnished any cavalry Regiment," the Rangers were placed on picket duty.

In December, a detachment commanded by Colonel Terry was ordered to join a force under General Hindman, at Woodsonville, and on the seventeenth Terry charged the Federals, only to fall dead in his first engagement. General Hardee said, in his official report: "The conduct of the 'Rangers' was marked by impetuous valor. In charging the enemy, Colonel Terry was killed in the moment of victory. His regiment deplores the loss of a beloved and brave commander, the army one of its ablest officers." Littlefield tersely said that "It was our first Engagement And a sad loss we sustained."

Lubbock, ill in Nashville at the time, was at once chosen to take Terry's place, Captain John A. Wharton was elected lieutenant-colonel, and Harrison continued as major. In a little while Lubbock died and Wharton rose to the command, with Captain John G. Walker, of Company K, advancing in rank to support him. The regiment continued its picket duty until January 20, 1862, when the men were ordered to Sinking Creek, between Nashville and Bowling Green, "to rest up their Horses." It was the first rest men or horses had enjoyed in six months' time, and they needed it, too.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dudley G. Wooten (ed.), *A Comprehensive History of Texas*, II, 682-83.

<sup>2</sup> Littlefield, Manuscript, "Autobiographical Sketch," 2, 19-21; Wooten, *A Comprehensive History*, II, 684; Daniell, *Men of Texas*, 346.

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While in camp on Sinking Creek, Lieutenant Richard Harris of Company I resigned, A. D. Harris was elected to his place, and Littlefield became second lieutenant. Returning to duty, the Rangers did picket service around Bowling Green until General Albert Sidney Johnston retreated to Corinth. Here an incident occurred that is significant of Littlefield's sympathies and character.

One day he was ordered to report to Regimental Headquarters. There, General Tom Hindman ordered him to take a detail of men and accompany an Irish soldier, who would guide them to a drugstore that was selling liquor to the troops. He was to destroy the liquor. The guide proved to be a drunken Irishman in search of another drink, who, upon being refused by the drugstore owner, had maliciously reported him to the officers. When Littlefield arrived at the store he not only found that the Irishman had lied, but he discovered the druggist to be "a first class Southern gentleman," who implored him not to destroy the liquor, but to ship it to the hospital at Nashville.

Now this sounded like genuine patriotism. But Littlefield had orders to destroy the stuff. Nevertheless, though he was only a boy of nineteen, he thought that he knew right from wrong. So he put the Irishman under arrest, and he and the druggist struck out for Hindman's headquarters to suggest the patriotic disposal of the liquor. But on the way he thought better of this deviation from military discipline, and turned back, saying to the druggist: "No, I am only a shirt-tail lieutenant,<sup>8</sup> and General Hindman might not like my suggestions."

He unlocked the cellar door opening upon the walk out-

<sup>8</sup> He evidently meant a "shavetail" lieutenant.

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side and rolled out the first barrel—a cask of apple brandy. The guard knocked out the head and poured the brandy into the frozen street. Pat Claiborne's Irish Brigade, standing in line a hundred yards away, caught the scent, broke ranks, and began kneeling down in reverent attitude, only to drink brandy from the frozen horse tracks. The Irish guide "begged pitifully" to be allowed to share the fate of his countrymen, but Littlefield was adamant; the guide could only stand and smell.

Now here was a dire dilemma. If Littlefield continued in the observance of military discipline, Pat Claiborne's fighting Irishmen would soon be dead drunk, which certainly would contribute neither to discipline nor military efficiency. So Littlefield had the entire supply of liquor moved to the basement, and, leaving the guide under arrest on the street, went below with the druggist and pounded the kegs until the distant audience thought all had been burst and the liquor shamelessly wasted. After telling the druggist that he supposed he could trust him, Littlefield locked up the place, and as the command left Bowling Green next day, he rode by with the rear guard and pitched the keys to the owner who, he observed, again in benediction, "was a good Southern man. . . . While this order was disobeyed," he admitted, "yet the heart always felt good for what was done."<sup>4</sup>

General Johnston had anticipated the Federal advance on the South through Kentucky in the early months of 1862, and, being a real strategist, knew that his army was inadequate, and his line of defense, far-flung and—penetrated by streams navigable by Federal gunboats—uncertain. The Fed-

<sup>4</sup> Littlefield, "Autobiography," 21-25.

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erals opened early in 1862, and vital parts of Johnston's defense, Forts Henry and Donelson in Tennessee, fell before the drive by General Grant. The Federals were thus cutting in behind Johnston, and he dropped back from Bowling Green to Nashville, and finally, in spite of severe criticism, to Corinth, Mississippi.

At Nashville, Captain Jones and Lieutenant Harris, of Company I of Terry's Rangers, were granted furloughs to return to Texas, and Lieutenant Littlefield was left in command. Meanwhile, the Federals were overrunning western Tennessee; but Grant was careless in consolidating his position, and Buell, who was to support him, was slow in coming up. Johnston saw all this, and, knowing that once Grant's and Buell's forces were combined his own inferior army could not withstand them, made a forced march to Corinth, and on April 6 fell on Grant's advance divisions at Shiloh Church. Grant was caught off base, and hurrying to the scene found a real battle in progress and his men getting the worst of the fight. The result is well known: the heavy losses of the Federals, the advance of Wallace and Buell in Grant's support, the death of Johnston on the verge of victory, and the withdrawal of the Confederate troops. Littlefield led his company through two days of fighting during which approximately one-third of his men were killed.

Then, toward the last of the month, Lieutenant Harris returned from his furlough; but the company was still without a captain. Until this time the choice had been made by election, and Littlefield, having given satisfaction on the field, was in line for promotion. But he was not yet twenty—the youngest man in the company except one—and was reluctant to accept advancement over men of greater ma-

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turity. He went to Colonel Wharton, explained his feelings, and begged him not to allow the company the right to elect its officers. Wharton was slow to depart from Terry's custom, but Littlefield reminded him that he was not yet twenty, that Lieutenant Harris was fourteen years older, and that he "would take it as a personal favor if he would order that all officers go up by promotion." Wharton then agreed, and Harris became captain, Littlefield first lieutenant, Parramore, second, and William E. Jones, third.

About ten days later Captain Harris was given two companies of Rangers and detailed to take the brigade wagon train across the Tennessee River. He charged a detachment of Federals guarding a railroad bridge, and in the skirmish was killed. Then, under the ruling that Wharton had just made, Littlefield was in line to go up by promotion, and again he was embarrassed.

Years later Littlefield scribbled out the incident on paper, using, with an impersonal air, the third person pronoun: "But Littlefield was very much Effected—Only one younger man than himself in his company, and himself not 20 years of age He pled with Col Wharton to grant an election. At last he agreed And Littlefield was Elected by acclimation as Captain." Parramore and Jones were next in line, and J. C. Dilworth, another Gonzales boy, who later was to be closely associated with Littlefield on the cattle trail, became third lieutenant.<sup>5</sup>

During the summer of 1862 the regiment was engaged in scout duty in southeastern Tennessee, sometimes work-

<sup>5</sup> Littlefield, "Autobiography," 26-28; Mrs. Kate Scurry Terrell, who wrote the account of Terry's Rangers as incorporated in Wootten (ed.), *A Comprehensive History*, II, differs in slight detail with Littlefield's recollections. See page 685.

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ing with Bedford Forrest, who was raiding and riding to mad fame in defiance of proven military tactics. After Johnston's death, the Texans joined General Bragg's forces in a campaign to hold eastern Tennessee—while the Federals cut the Confederacy in two upon the Mississippi. Bragg attempted to raise recruits at Chattanooga, while Buell, who was deployed against him, took up his station at Murfreesboro to keep Nashville from falling back into the hands of the southerners. In the late summer Bragg took the offensive, skirted Buell's left flank, pushed north into Kentucky, seized Lexington, and threw Louisville and Cincinnati into a frenzy of fear.

Buell forgot Chattanooga and hurried after him. When the Confederate advance was within about four miles of Louisville it ran into Buell's cavalry, and after a skirmish fell back on the main column and moved toward Bardstown. John A. Wharton, then in command of the brigade, was cut off from his command while covering Bragg's rear. Tom Harrison asked for orders and Wharton is said to have replied:

“Charge them outright. Up, Rangers, and at them!”

At this moment, the Federal cavalry charged; but the Ranger bugler, with sixshooter in his right hand, wrapped his bridle reins around the horn of his saddle, blew a charge, and Texas sixshooters overcame the Yankee sabers, as Wharton and his men fought back through the northern lines to their own column. In the free-for-all fight, Captain Littlefield and three of his men became separated from the command, and, accidentally coming upon a party of Ohio cavalry, killed or captured ten men and four officers; but a countercharge from the enemy forced them to leave their

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prisoners and make a run for their command. Bragg might have taken Louisville, but the Kentuckians had not rallied to his aid as he had hoped, and so, day by day, he skirmished and fought and fell back.

At Perryville, the enemy came up in force and fought hotly from noon until late at night, the Rangers still bearing the brunt in retreat, and lying out in front all night in the sleet and snow, eating parched corn—for they had had nothing to eat during the day. Next day Bragg continued his retreat toward Cumberland Gap, carrying his captured supplies with him. When the Confederate Army was near Knoxville, Tennessee, three officers, one of whom was Littlefield, were ordered to Texas to raise recruits. They were to report again in ninety days.<sup>6</sup>

Littlefield made his way back to Gonzales, but found men scarce and patriotism waning. He raised a few men, but found, doubtless to his discouragement, that fervor for the southern cause in Texas was already cooling. Anyway, his success in recruiting could hardly have been so striking as that of Thomas N. Waul, his plantation neighbor on the San Antonio road, who had invoked the passions of the populace at Gonzales a few months before. Littlefield was a man of the soil, simple of speech and direct in action. Waul, an austere, retired Gonzales lawyer, was an orator who could spellbind an audience. Perhaps, at a time like this, there was a place for both. As usual, there is no record of the man who went about his work quietly; but there is one of the dramatic Waul.

Waul had married a rich bride and retired from his law

<sup>6</sup> Wooten (ed.), *A Comprehensive History*, II, 687-88; Daniell, *Men of Texas*, 346ff.

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practice to his plantation home on the Guadalupe River, near Mrs. Littlefield. He was a leader of secession sentiment, and in the spring of 1862 he organized a legion of fighters. He was "a man of fine physique, light hair and full beard, deep blue eyes, erect and elastic in gait, a cavalier," and a really gallant figure as he went from place to place in a "magnificent ambulance, drawn by four large, fine black mules," handled by a special driver. He traveled about, firing the people, and, being an "artful and eloquent" man, he so aroused the citizens of Gonzales when he spoke at the courthouse, on the spacious square, that even the children wanted to join.

He defended the South's right of secession; he informed his audience of the exigencies of war; he moved them with his eloquence. "His recital on this occasion [of the story] of the ancient city whose patriotic women gave their hair for bow strings and their girdles for sword belts" was described as "awc inspiring." Then he reached his climax with the scene of the burial of a soldier of the Army of Northern Virginia, which he described thus:

"This soldier in one of the terrible battles was badly wounded and carried to a good farmer man's house near by, who was also in the Confederate army, to be treated, and died . . . all the men of the neighborhood were also in the army. His body was prepared and taken to the grave for burial and when they got there to bury him, they being all women and children, there was no one to read the burial service over the body. . . . a brave patriotic Southern Christian girl, about nineteen years of age, stepped forward from out of the crowd and said I will read it and did too."

At this point Waul's audience was hushed and breath-

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less. Then "Waul straightened himself up to his full height and beautifully raised his eyes and hands to Heaven, valiantly and loudly exclaimed, 'I had rather today wear that glorious girl's crown in Heaven than that of the highest archangel that sings around the throne of God.' The effect on the crowd was terrible . . . the people went wild," and many a volunteer flocked to his standard. Littlefield's nephew, John Dowell, begged his mother to let him go fight the Yankees, and one of his chums, Billy Miller, son of Major Alsey Miller, did not take the matter up with his parents, but "instead took his father's sixshooter and gun, got on his pony, joined a passing company, and went to the war right."<sup>7</sup>



Thus did General Waul, Littlefield's fellow townsman and neighbor, raise volunteers for the cause. But we may be sure that Littlefield's activities, while no less sincere and ardent, were of a quietly solicitous kind, for he was ever

<sup>7</sup> Gonzales *Daily Inquirer*, April 3-4, 1914; Daniell, *Men of Texas*, 346ff.

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of a nature to avoid the spectacular. He succeeded in getting a few volunteers, and on his way back to the southern lines he stopped in Houston long enough to marry Alice P. Tiller, step-daughter of Whitfield Harral, on January 14, 1863. She had been in school at Gonzales before the war, and he had met and courted her there. But the South was in dire need, there was no time to tarry, and with his recruits he rejoined his command on February 15, near Murfreesboro.<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, on New Year's Eve Bragg and Rosecrans had fought the indecisive battle of Stone's River, or Murfreesboro, after which the Confederate command had retired along the road to Chattanooga. The months dragged by in routine service, while General Rosecrans, the Federal commander, dallied, awaiting the outcome of Grant's siege of Vicksburg. At last, late in June, Rosecrans went into action and flanked Bragg, driving him back into Chattanooga without a battle. Then, as Longstreet and Buckner were coming up from the south with Confederate reinforcements, Bragg moved out to meet them. Meanwhile, instead of taking the easy approach to the town from the north, as Bragg had expected, Rosecrans floundered in through the broken country to the south, where Bragg, had he been alert, could have routed him. But he waited until September 18, 1863, to strike, and by that time the Federals had consolidated their position twelve miles south, between Bragg and Chattanooga. In the battle of Chickamauga, fought there on the nineteenth and twentieth, the southerners carried the field, at tremendous cost in dead and wounded, and drove the retreating Federals into Chattanooga, where they entrenched.

The night after the battle, Littlefield was detailed to re-

<sup>8</sup> Daniell, *Men of Texas*, 346ff.; *The Dallas News*, November 11, 1920.

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port to the division headquarters of the cavalry, then commanded by Joe Wheeler. He was ordered back over the battlefield to a point some fifteen miles north of Chickamauga Creek, to guard a ford. A brigade of enemy cavalry with a supply train had been cut off during the battle, and was known to be somewhere up the creek. He was told to hold the ford and scout for the enemy. It had been a bloody battle, and his ride from headquarters over the moonlit battlefield, where muttered prayers still rose from the wounded and the death rattle from the throats of the dying, was a gruesome, unforgettable experience.

Littlefield's detachment occupied the ford and sent out a scouting party. About daylight a runner reported that the enemy cavalry had been found, and General Wharton rode out with his command and fell upon them. One detachment tried to pass the ford, but Littlefield beat them back, and Wharton captured three hundred prisoners and their supply train.

Bragg now laid siege to the town that had fallen, ironically, to the defeated Federals. Joe Wheeler's cavalry, to which the Rangers had been attached, was ordered on a raid into central Tennessee. They foraged for food, ate in the saddle, and slept on the move from sheer exhaustion. They crossed the Tennessee River fifty miles above Chattanooga, raided and plundered night and day, destroyed munitions and supplies moving to Rosecrans at Chattanooga, completely encircled the opposing army, and rode back in ten days, worn to a frazzle, but said to have been "the best dressed regiment in the Confederate army." They had raided sutlers' stores all along the way. Wheeler captured many prisoners, hundreds of wagons, and stores of munitions and

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supplies, destroyed bridges, and returned to his regiment with an enviable record of his own as a harbinger of destruction.

But the campaign to break the Confederacy in two was moving apace, while Bragg occupied Missionary Ridge and Lookout Mountain and threatened Rosecrans with starvation. The North was alarmed, Rosecrans was removed, and Grant himself was ordered to Chattanooga. Bragg, underestimating the potential reserves of the enemy and the resourcefulness of Grant, had sent Longstreet off to harry Burnside at Knoxville. Grant maneuvered into position, defeated Bragg at Lookout Mountain, and the Confederates withdrew. Bragg was displaced and the Rangers were sent to cover Longstreet's rear as he pressed down on Burnside, in the East Tennessee campaign.

After the battle of Chickamauga, Littlefield had been called to regimental headquarters to act as major of the regiment. He served in this capacity until November, when, owing to a field officer's being wounded, he became acting lieutenant-colonel, and so continued until, at Mossy Creek in eastern Tennessee, the day after Christmas of 1863, he was knocked from his horse by a fragment of a bursting shell that carried away the fleshy part of his left hip and left a terrible wound. General Tom Harrison passed where he lay on the field of battle, paused, looked at him and said:

"I promote him to the rank of Major for gallantry in action."

He was picked up and conveyed by ambulance four miles to the rear, where late that night his wound was finally dressed. At first Major Holmes, the surgeon, passed him by, simply telling an orderly to give him a little morphine—"he

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would die before morning." Then W. H. Kyle, Littlefield's orderly, came in with a bottle of apple brandy, just as General Harrison appeared from the field, all covered with sleet and snow. Littlefield called him to join in a drink, which Harrison did, toasting to his speedy recovery, while Littlefield drank to the surgeon who said he would die before morning. Upon hearing what had happened, Harrison hurried off after Holmes and ordered him to dress the wound.

By this time the Confederates were retreating, and were forced to move their wounded that night. They loaded them in ambulances and took them twelve miles back to a farmhouse; in spite of the shock of this additional jostling, Littlefield did not "die before morning." Next day they were forced to move again, this time fifteen miles back, after which, Littlefield gratefully remembered, he was left "where a true Southern family lived." Here he lay "almost unconscious" for about three weeks, "kept alive on morphine and brandy." Harrison left Ed Rhodes, a close friend of Littlefield's in Company I, and Nathan, his Negro bodyservant, to attend him. Here "Old Nath," a slave, but a character in his own right, becomes a part of the Littlefield tradition. According to that tradition, Nath picked his master up from the field and fled, packing him back several miles to the rear. Then, in keeping with his lowly station and his exalted loyalty, he nursed his master until he recovered. When Littlefield had prepared to leave for the war, Nath, one of the Fleming Littlefield slaves who had looked after George as a child, went to Mrs. Littlefield and implored permission to go with him.

"Old Mistis," he said, "I want you to let me go with



*Major Littlefield in Confederate uniform*

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Master George to the war. I want to be with him and wait on him."

She told him to get his clothes ready, and Nath, mounted on a good horse, left with "Old Mistis'" injunction to take good care of his young master.<sup>9</sup> And this he faithfully did, gaining thereby the undying gratitude of his owner.

Meanwhile, the wedge that the Federals were driving through the heart of the Confederacy was being hammered deeper, and Longstreet retreated into Virginia. In April, as the army moved east, Littlefield was placed on a cot and moved to Morristown, and then to Abingdon, Virginia, where he stayed until he could move about on crutches, after five months in bed. About the first of June, he, Rhodes, and Nath went into the Ranger camp near Dalton, Georgia, where he was given a furlough of sixty days. He spent the time visiting with an Alabama relative, and when he returned, still incapacitated, the surgeon advised him to retire. Acting upon this advice he sent in his resignation, and upon its acceptance he and Nath struck out horseback for their home in Texas. He carried his crutches as he rode. He reached Gonzales about the last of September and, with characteristically decisive action, a few days later, on October 4, 1864, took charge of his own and his brother's plantation. To his surprise, he said, he made a success of farming.

At an accelerated pace, however, the Confederacy was going to pieces, and what in the South is most significantly known as "the breakup" was close at hand.

<sup>9</sup> Besides his brief "Autobiographical Sketch," the best account of Littlefield's service with the Confederacy is given by Daniell, *Types of Successful Men of Texas*, yet it is fragmentary and leaves much to be desired. A great number of later biographical sketches largely duplicate or agree, in lesser detail, with Daniell's account. See *San Antonio Express*, June 4, 1916.

### CHAPTER THREE

## FROM FARMING COTTON TO TRAILING CATTLE

BY the time Littlefield reached home, it must have been obvious to anyone of his native acuteness that the days of the Confederacy were numbered, and numbered in fatal black. The South was cut in two, desertions from the army were increasing, the currency was without support and under suspicion, credit and trade were disrupted, and spirit was steadily ebbing. Texas, too, was feeling the general depression of economy and morale, and the end was clearly but a matter of time.

To a certain degree, however, the normal processes of Texas life flowed on, and, compared with the deep South, the state was decidedly "in clover." Cotton, corn, pork, and beef were still produced on the plantations, and though supplies which moved through uncertain channels to the army were paid for in worthless government orders or Confederate currency, this blight on commerce was partly compensated by uncertain trade with Mexico that was settled on the basis of barter, or sometimes even in gold. Cotton was wanted in the markets of the world, and when it ran the blockade to reach a responsible buyer, it commanded a heavy premium in specie. Sections of the frontier that had cattle but

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no cotton sent small and scattered herds into Mexico to barter for a few homely necessities, sometimes sugar, and especially green coffee in the bean.

The Littlefield slaves still sang at their work in the San Marcos and Guadalupe bottoms when young "Marse George," hobbling about on crutches, took over the Charles White plantation that he and his brother William owned. Close contact with the unspoiled out-of-doors always softens the shock of human tragedy, and dulls for harried and badgered men the acutest pains of defeat. Daily there was hard work to engage interest and energy, and at night physical exhaustion was genuine balm for the soul in suffering. But then, as now, in the towns it was different. And so, even in the Texas villages, apprehension of the impending doom of the Confederacy filtered in to destroy the calm of the people. Gonzales, the home of warriors, "the birth-place of Texas liberty," did not escape it.

Texas suffered from Federal attempts at her borders—Red River, Sabine Pass, Galveston, Matagorda, the Rio Grande—but fortunately the enemy never gained more than a foothold. Yet, in fear, the "stay-at-homes" in Gonzales busied themselves in local defense, and "Fort Magruder," named apparently for the Confederate general in charge of the district at Houston, was laid out a mile and a half from town, on the road that led to Austin. It was constructed, or dug, in part by Mrs. Littlefield's slaves, for in a wave of alarm there was "digging in and in a hurry, for Magruder thought the Yankees were coming at once . . ." But this "crisis," like some subsequent ones, passed, with a little meditation, and the dirt ceased to fly.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Gonzales Daily Inquirer*, March 5, 1914.

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All during the conflict, however, that calm assurance which is the heritage of the rural regions, and that self-confidence that comes by imperceptible degrees to those who build a successful life in the country, kept Mrs. Littlefield at her appointed task of running three large plantations efficiently and well. Those who knew her slightly looked upon her as one "quite wealthy before the War," and those who knew her well were agreed as to her ability to meet the multitudinous demands of her estate. Above all, as her grandchildren recall, she was devoted to Dixie.

The family, because of extensive farming interests, might have claimed the legal exemptions from military service,<sup>2</sup> yet all her boys, four sons and two sons-in-law, as well as "three young men who made her house their home," were in the army. She kept her two daughters at home, and, in addition, the daughter of "an old man who wished to join the army" but had no way of supporting his family.

"All during the War," wrote John Dowell, "out of her corn crib she fed many a poor soldier's wife and children while he was at the front. She never turned one away. Many of them got wagon loads of corn . . . making thousands and thousands of bushels given. I was directed by her to go to the crib and measure it out in barrels to them . . ." Dowell used to sit by the door and cut notches on the crib and rafters to indicate the number of barrels that he had given, and many years later he wrote that "the face of the doors, windows and rafters of that big old two room house, with a big hall between, were literally cut all over with notches made by me in this work."

<sup>2</sup> Exemptions from conscription into military service were granted to owners and operators of large plantations who would bind themselves to produce foodstuffs for the government.

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Yet in spite of the drain on the crib, "she always said: 'Give them a full barrel, as they . . . [are] soldiers' wives.' "

All soldiers were welcome at her home and her table, to stay as long as they wished. At one time she allowed Edgar's entire battery to camp in her front yard, entertained the officers in the house, and fed them all. Only once, so far as is remembered, was her confidence and hospitality betrayed.

On this occasion, two men came by who pretended to be Confederate soldiers, and of course they were given the run of the place. They slept in the plantation office, about fifty yards from the house, and the next morning they were gone. Gone too was a new sixshooter, two gold watches, and "Charley," a dapple-grey, five-hundred-dollar Arabian stallion that belonged to Jim Bailey, one of Mrs. Littlefield's foremen. With her usual determination and energy, she organized a posse under another overseer, William Hunter, and put it on the trail of the thieves. The posse followed their plain course through the broken-down bloodweeds in the luxuriant Guadalupe bottom, out onto the uplands, and across to the southwest. Hunter was gone for a week, but returned to report that he had lost the trail, which led off toward Mexico. The horse was later captured on the Rio Grande by the Confederate leader, Benevides, from a description sent out, and commanderec for his own mount. Benevides refused to give him up, but paid Bailey five hundred dollars for him—in Confederate currency!\*

Business details did not escape Mrs. Littlefield's vigilant attention. She successfully sued for collection of debts whenever occasion justified, as the Gonzales county records abundantly testify. She enlarged her land holdings by purchase,

\* *Gonzales Daily Inquirer*, December 30, 1913, and January 24, 1914.

## FROM COTTON TO CATTLE

and attended to the needs of her Negroes. Upon her plantations "the patroller of the night," from which came the refrain—"Run, nigger run, the patroller will catch you"—made his regular rounds. The record that there was "no unnecessary whipping" of course implies that there was some, but judging from the time-dimmed memories of those who are left, we may believe the claim that "no brutality was tolerated."

Three overseers were regularly employed, two of whom were the Baileys, who have been mentioned before. William Hunter, another, was a one-eyed man inclined to be hard. He kept the Negro dogs, among them one that "could run a negro's trail three days old if the weather had been still and cloudy . . ." He wielded a mean whip, and had almost everyone cowed except "Old Mistis." Another noted overseer was Bill Burris, a big, fat man who always rode a mule, with "his ever present negro paddle strapped to the horn of his saddle." This paddle was made of a piece of an old gin belt, several inches wide and a foot and a half long, and was laced to a wooden handle, through the end of which was a buckskin string for looping over the saddle horn. In use, it is said, it was sometimes "dipped in warm salt water so as not to raise blisters too bad." While an old-time plantation overseer "would as soon be without his hat as this instrument of enforcing discipline," its use on the Littlefield plantations was "limited," and again it is claimed that "whippings were few and far between."<sup>4</sup>

All this may indicate something of the nature of the life and the men that made up the world of "Old Mistis." And

<sup>4</sup> Gonzales *Daily Inquirer*, January 15 and March 3 and 5, 1914; Daniel, *Men of Texas*, 345.

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yet, if it sounds hardly in keeping with the southern tradition of the sheltered and protected domain of genteel women, it can only be said that history sometimes deals harshly with legend and tradition. Nevertheless, Major Littlefield's mother likewise did her duties in a more purely domestic way.

It is not recorded whether she joined in the rebel songs at Gonzales in the fall of 1862, when hearts beat strong and hopes ran high, and the village patriots sang:

*Hurrah for Southern rights, Hurrah!  
Hurrah for the bonnie blue flag that bears a  
single star.  
We envy not the Northern girl in robes of  
beauty rare,  
But hurrah for the homespun dress that  
Southern ladies wear.*

But what is significant is the fact that, when the Texas coast was blockaded, she got out the hand cards, installed the spinning jennys and looms in her home, took wool from her own flock and cotton from her farm, and began making clothes for her own establishment—one that numbered scores of people, white and black.

She then mounted a horse and rode to the Rack school-house, nearby, to join the neighborhood women in a sewing circle devoted to making clothes for the soldiers, particularly "the Gonzales boys." Schools generally were suspended during this period, and she brought home a German girl, Mary E. Kaufmann, from near Yorktown, to teach her grandchildren and her neighbor's children. Mrs. Littlefield maintained the school at the plantation home throughout the war, and made the children read the Bible regularly for the fruits of

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the good life, while Miss Kaufmann whipped them "when necessary" to impress them with the wages of sin.<sup>5</sup>

Mrs. Littlefield's gifts to charities throughout the war were said to have been extremely generous, and though her holdings were still large at the end, her losses were ruinous. Fortunately, by that time her son George was at home to help her, but according to the memories of her Negroes and others, her own strong will continued to be her chief reliance. One more scene appropriately closes this brief account of her plantation life.

General Gordon Granger, of the Federal forces, reached Galveston on June 19, 1865, from New Orleans, to direct the affairs of Texas. In keeping with the Emancipation Proclamation of the President of the United States, he immediately declared that all slaves were free, thereby establishing the "national holiday" of the Negro in Texas.<sup>6</sup> Texas slave owners, hoping for concessions from the moderate reconstruction government, were somewhat slow to respond. Gradually, however, emancipation of the Negroes was achieved, and when a copy of Granger's order came into Mrs. Littlefield's hands, she enacted its decree.

She told her overseer, Jim Bailey, to call all her Negroes together at the big house. Then, without a trace of emotion, she stood erect on the long front gallery, read them the military order, and told them "in plain and emphatic words" that they were free to go where they wished, as "she did not own them any longer." They heard her in silence, and then, almost in one voice, cried out:

<sup>5</sup> Gonzales *Daily Inquirer*, January 24, March 2 and 21, and April 6, 1914.

<sup>6</sup> Charles William Ramsdell, *Reconstruction in Texas*, 39-40.

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"Old Mistis, we will stay with you!" And most of them did.

Bailey gave each of them a horse and fifty dollars, turned some stock cattle over to them, fenced off a two-acre lot on his own land, and built them a schoolhouse and church combined. His favorite Negro, old Addison Carter, whom Harrison McClure, another slave, called a "jack-leg," did the preaching. Addison rated high with Bailey, who exercised a sort of feudal protectorate over him, saying: "When you hit Addison, hit Bailey."<sup>7</sup>

This account may suggest that the life that was passing was not ideal; but neither was it all bad. Harrison McClure thought the Negroes were better off before "freedom" came; that they lived better then than afterwards; and that the planters made more money off the Negroes after they were freed than before. He said:

"When the darkies was freed some of them didn't know which way to go. They never was free before. Marse George told them, 'You is free as me. You can go anywhere you please and do as you please.' Some of them thought it was a great life to go stealing for a living, and a lot of them did that way too, and a lot of them was killed for it too.

"The first year they were turned loose, they [the owners] made a proposition to the darkies that if they'd stay there and help gather the crop, they'd give them half of it. They had a big crop. Old Mis', Mrs. Waul and Jim Bailey—all their places were right together—all made their darkies the same proposition. Then in '66 they furnished them land on halves, and furnished teams and feed. If they rented

<sup>7</sup> Gonzales *Daily Inquirer*, January 27, 1914; Harrison McClure to J. E. H., September 22, 1935.

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for thirds, then the darkies had to furnish teams, feed, and all. The niggers had to feed themselves then, pay their doctors bills, buy their clothes and everything. White folks made a lot more out of the niggers after freedom than they did before—sho they did.”<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, there was general confusion and anxiety as to the status of the Negro, the changing and ominous features of the state government, and the future material welfare of the country. It really was the “break-up,” not only of the institutions of government and economy, but of the deeply ingrained Anglo-Saxon respect for law and order, and the proprieties and decencies of a genteel, civilized society.<sup>9</sup>

Littlefield was twenty-six years old in 1868, at the time of the Reconstruction Convention. The handwriting on the state walls at Austin told a story of future trouble that even a young man who had learned to read his lessons in the sweat and blood of struggling men could understand. That he was aware of the trend of the times and the eventual harvest of social and moral disintegration is indicated by a letter Littlefield wrote in that year to his half-brother, John H. White:

The political condition is sad and gloomy. . . . Our convention has adjourned, and are now at home instructing the loyal worthies the importance of going Radical, if we should have an Election. Our labor is now, or will be, completely demoralized & ruined. No man with the brains of a chicken can entertain the

<sup>8</sup> Harrison McClure to J. E. H., September 22, 1935, and January 14, 1938. McClure proved to be one of the fullest sources of information about Littlefield plantation life.

<sup>9</sup> Ramsdell's *Reconstruction in Texas* presents the significance of the period and the progress of dissolution.

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*slightes[t]* thought of them improving. Sad experience and nothing else, will bring about a change for the better. I believe as I have done for some time, that we The Democrats will be defeated, and that the next four years to come is as full of gloom and despair as our country has ever witnesscd. I hope, *but cant believe*, there is any better for us. I fear we have seen our balmyest days, and the great uncertainty death and destruction thats abroad upon the land will remain as it is untill the present generation has passed away.<sup>10</sup>

Into this revolutionary readjustment of southern life George W. Littlefield stepped—albeit on crutches until 1867—to take up the job of farming. It is hard to harmonize his later statement that he was “a veritable greenhorn in the field of cotton, unable to tell one kind of plow from another,” with the factual background of his youth. Anyway, he began farming with zeal, and “his ability to manage men—black men in this case—stood him in good play . . .” The first year was a good one for agriculture, and in his own brief and impersonal style he wrote: “To his surprise He made a success, making a very fine crop in 1865. He continued farming on a larger scale.”<sup>11</sup>

Like other southern planters of character, he continued the sympathetic policies of his mother, and though there were abuses and injustices, his treatment of his Negroes then,

<sup>10</sup> See Charles W. Ramsdell, *Reconstruction*, for the work of the Reconstruction Convention of 1868, and for the outcome of the radical movement which Littlefield so realistically anticipated. See also George W. Littlefield to John H. White, September 26, 1868, in the Dowell Papers, owned by M. H. Dowell, Luling, Texas. Copies are in the Littlefield Collection, University of Texas.

<sup>11</sup> *San Antonio Express*, June 4, 1916; Littlefield, “Autobiographical Sketch,” 5.

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and his concern for them later, was indicative of a simple, honest relationship, neither patronizing nor domineering in nature. There were "thirty or forty" of the Charles White Negroes that he and his brother had owned, and six who were brought into the family by Alice Tiller, Major Littlefield's wife. "When emancipation came," Harrison McClure says, "he kept them on the place as long as they wanted to stay there . . . Times never were hard . . . He was good to them."<sup>12</sup>

While holding himself to the rigid and necessary discipline of the successful man of business, Littlefield took time for hunting—perhaps the only sport in which he ever indulged. He was remembered by Harrison McClure as a "terrible huntsman," who would, after killing a mess of ducks on the river with his double-barreled gun, jump old Phil—the horse he had been riding when he was wounded at Mossy Creek—into the water and swim him about as a retriever, his rider picking up the ducks as he circled about in the stream. Littlefield had a good pack of dogs, was death on 'possums and 'coons, and always loved the sound of a baying hound.

He could lure a covey of bobwhite up by imitating them. "He was a pretty sharp fellow," appraised the admiring McClure. "He was shrewd. He loved to hunt and have a good time in the woods. He never was no man for drinking whiskey, running around, and gambling. He'd drink a toddy but no raw whiskey. I used to make coffee for him just as strong as lye when he was in camp. He didn't use no sugar, but when he got money he wanted sugar, just like the rest of the rich folks."<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Harrison McClure to J. E. H., September 22, 1935.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

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In 1867 Littlefield was at last able to lay aside his crutches, and finding his farming successful, he decided to operate on a larger scale and began buying out the interests of other members of the family. He bought the Thomas J. White land at a bankruptcy sale in the summer of 1868. This land was ten miles above Gonzales. He bought the interests of John H. White and of Theo. E. Harral, his brother-in-law, in the Charles White farm. That same year he acquired from Harral's bankrupt estate, an additional tract in the forks of the rivers. His brother, William P. Littlefield, was his antithesis in business affairs, always loose, easy, and improvident, and in 1870 Littlefield bought his undivided one-half interest in their father's home place by canceling two notes that Bill owed him, and by assuming his indebtedness to G. N. and J. C. Dilworth, merchants of Gonzales. In addition, Bill assigned to George his half interest in some six hundred head of cattle and thirty horses that the two owned jointly.<sup>14</sup>

In spite of the disruption of all business caused by the war and the uncertainties of reconstruction, Littlefield's ventures seemed to be moving successfully. But in 1868, the year during which he was greatly expanding his farm interests, and even buying lots in town, he suffered a serious reversal on the farms. To make his responsibilities heavier, his sister and her husband, Dr. Greenville Dowell, had separated; and though Littlefield was only twenty-six years old, he had a deep conviction of the value of education, and had sent John Dowell, his grown nephew, off to Washington College at Lexington, Virginia. There the boy far exceeded the sponsor's original budget, and in September, 1868, Littlefield

<sup>14</sup> Gonzales County, *Deed Records*, Vols. M, 563-65; Q, 367, 383, 504, 519; and R, 434 and 436.

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wrote and sent more money. However, in an accompanying letter he warned:

I hope that will be ample funds to take you through the year for we will make a total failure in cotton this year. Mother's place, for instance, will not make five bales of cotton. Another year like this, will break us all. I will have to borrow funds to go upon next year. But don't intend to be discouraged will strike on large scale next year to farm.<sup>15</sup>

A few weeks later Littlefield wrote to John H. White, in Mississippi, regretting that he too was "doomed to the mercy of the dred cotton worm. Our crops have been completely devastated by them." He continued:

Our corn seriously injured by drouth. We'll have plenty to feed upon but none to sell. On Mother's farm we will get one bale of cotton & on Plantation five Bales on Charleys place twenty five bales. The total number of acres planted, is five hundred. You may surmise, our financial condition. This is about the condition of all the river farms. Upland is doing better.<sup>16</sup>

Thus passed the farming season of 1868, while the plantation owners stretched their credit and obligations into the coming year.

And in 1869 nature smiled on those who believed that cotton was the economic king. The deep soils of the Guadalupe and San Marcos bottoms bloomed with the promise of

<sup>15</sup> George W. Littlefield to John W. Dowell, Sept. 1, 1868, in Dowell Papers.

<sup>16</sup> George W. Littlefield to John H. White, Sept. 26, 1868, in Dowell Papers.

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a rich harvest. But nature seldom considers the rosy hopes of man, the puny plans of society, or the legislative decrees of collective bodies. She inevitably has her way. The high hopes of late June were devastated in July by a flood that swept across the bottoms and completely destroyed the crop. A great many persons were drowned, "people went around in boats," and "it was said by the oldest of settlers" that it was the worst flood they had ever had.

Shelton Dowell, one of Littlefield's nephews, who later became a foreman for him on the range, wrote his brother in college that everything had been destroyed, and that they had "no money and very little prospects of getting any." Fences were washed away; in places the soil was cut away to the white chalk base; and the channel of the river "they all say . . . is 30 ft. wider than it was before the rise . . . on Uncle Charleys place it washed away all the fenceing on to Mr. Wilson's place below. and he did not want Uncle George to move them; but he did [move the rails] without his consent he reared and pitched mightily but it did no good. their has been the greatest squabble here for rails that I ever saw or heard tell of . . . their was several Negroes drownded above here, but none in Town that we Know of."<sup>17</sup> Devastation by army worms one year, complete loss of everything by flood the next; yet, "while it was bad," Littlefield said, he "concluded it could be worse."

Littlefield was not one to wait for help. Instead, he went down the river and retrieved his rails, even though the war-like Wilson "pitched and reared." Then he took over his mother's plantation, which also had been swept clean by

<sup>17</sup> George W. Littlefield to John W. Dowell, June 25, 1869; Alice M. Dowell to J. W. Dowell, July 18, 1869; Shelton Dowell to John W. Dowell, July 31, 1869, all from Dowell Papers.



*"Littlefield had horses of his own on the range"*

flood, and "doubled up" on cotton the following year. His earlier, optimistic conclusion that "it could be worse" was entirely justified. Another promising crop was on the stalks in 1870 when the Guadalupe and San Marcos bottoms had another bad flood, and all was lost—all but the fortitude and the will of a virile people.

In addition to the ruinous drain of war, the misfortune of defeat, the repressive rule of radical politicians, Littlefield had suffered three dire and disastrous losses. He had no money left, but he had debts that burdened him with two per cent interest monthly, and, instead of a moratorium by Federal decree, a conscience and a code that told him he must pay. And while "nothing but want and ruin could be seen," he still had the will, the energy, and the ingenuity to venture. "He said to the negroes who were working the land that he could only feed them," but he told them to take his teams and tools and go to work for themselves.<sup>18</sup>

Littlefield had horses of his own on the range. Texas generally was overrun with them. But in the older South the

<sup>18</sup> Littlefield, "Autobiographical Sketch," 5-6; *San Antonio Express*, June 14, 1916; *The Dallas News*, November 11, 1920.

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demands of war had left a different situation. Horses were needed. The record here is unusually difficult to trace, but as early as 1868 Littlefield seems to have been thinking of driving horses and cattle to Mississippi. After the flood of 1869 he went to Alabama to settle up the Satterwhite estate, over which he feared there would be trouble, and wrote that he would "return immediately to Texas after some Horses and mules for this State."

He left no record of how many horses he drove. But the horse trade was not sufficient. His debts grew heavier, and everyone was demanding pay in solid gold instead of paper currency. The means of his economic salvation, as Littlefield soon saw, were the cattle which ran wild over Texas, some carrying his own brand. In fact, ever since the close of the war, Texans had been pointing their herds toward Missouri and Kansas, and the indicators of Texas finance now pointed, with the certainty of the magnetic needle, straight into the North. Littlefield saw the economic drift from the cotton field to the cattle trail. He turned his attention to his stock on the range, and turned his hopes for fortune and his energies for its achievement up the Texas Trail toward northern markets—a wise and significant diversion.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### UP THE TRAIL TO KANSAS

JUST how successful Littlefield's horse trailing turned out to be is now a matter of conjecture. Many stock and saddle horses were driven from Texas, but instead of going into the South, most of them went up the cattle trails to the North. The handling of horses has a fascination all its own, and those who followed it then, as well as those who dabbled in it later, did so for reasons other than the making of money. As he wanted to make money faster than the horse business promised, Littlefield quit it and went into the cow business.

For years the Littlefields had run cattle on their plantations and on the open range uplands back from their bottom lands, but for some time before he took the trail, Littlefield had been accumulating cattle as a sideline. According to Charlie Walker, an LFD ranch veteran who grew up at Gonzales, Littlefield explained his initial venture with cows as an attempt to offset the credit ledger kept at a roadside store. In 1866, while he was still on crutches, he made his start in the mercantile business by setting up a store on his mother's plantation alongside the San Antonio-Gonzales Road. Money was scarce and the accounts he accumulated were often paid in cattle, then the current collateral of the Texas frontier. As the reverses of 1868-70 left him with a heavy

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debt bearing 24 per cent interest, he fell back on his herd—his mobile assets. He decided to gather his cattle and trail to market.<sup>1</sup>

According to a persistent story, unverified by his brief written memoirs, he drove his first herd to Shreveport.<sup>2</sup> A great many Texas cattle did go to market there in earlier drives, and though Littlefield knew that trail from trips into Mississippi, it is doubtful that he ever drove it. Timely, however, for his own fortunes was the fact that the trailing of Texas cattle was past the experimental stages when the drivers were uncertainly feeling for markets in New Orleans, Natchez, Shreveport, Sedalia, Kansas City, Denver, and even San Francisco. For now Joseph G. McCoy had built his yards at Abilene, Kansas, and the cattle trade there had grown for four years with optimistic assurance.

When a Texan decided to drive in 1871, there was little debate over destination; the lodestar of the trail driver hung low over the prairies of north-central Kansas; and the lead steers of many a longhorn herd pointed the magnetic course to the shipping pens at Abilene.

To a mixed herd of six hundred head of his own,<sup>3</sup> Littlefield added some five hundred more bought on credit, and when the grass rose in the spring of 1871, he pointed his leaders into the north wind and joined that rough and ragged migration of Texas trail men that moved slowly and hopefully, but recklessly, up the trail to Kansas. One incident alone marred his departure.

<sup>1</sup> Daniell, *Men of Texas*, 351; Charlie Walker to J. E. H., March 5, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> Charlie Walker, to J. E. H., as cited.

<sup>3</sup> In the language of the trail, a "mixed herd" is one made up of steers and stock cattle. Unless the stock cattle consist altogether of dry cows, they are much more difficult to handle—to drive—than a straight steer herd.

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It had to do with the rather remarkable Negro boy, Harrison McClure, whose early life was rooted in slavery, but whose youthful destiny lay up the trail with Littlefield, and whose ardent love for the soil of Gonzales County ripened with age. He was born into the ownership of the McClures, at Winnsboro, Louisiana, and was brought to Gonzales by his "two Missuses"—Miss Cornelia and Miss Thank McClure—who came out in 1861 to join their sister and her husband, the editor of the Gonzales *Inquirer*. Alice P. Tiller lived at their home while attending the local college, and there George Littlefield used to go to court her. There, too, he fell under the shining eyes of the darky boy, and when an amended Federal Constitution and Reconstruction came to cut this boy adrift from his old ties, and his mother remarried and moved off with another husband, he went to the Littlefield plantation and, in the way of the devoted darky, simply took up residence with the white folks of his choice.

A Freedman's Bureau in Gonzales, and meddlesome bureaucrats everywhere, made southerners cautious, and to establish the legality of the relationship Littlefield applied for guardianship over the minor. Miller and Sayers, bankers and lawyers of Gonzales, drew up the papers, and Harrison passed under the legal custody, as well as the paternal care, of the Major. For the boy, at least in retrospect, it was an idyllic existence, without much to do except trail about, faithful as a shadow, in the footsteps of Littlefield.

Meanwhile, Harrison's mother had gone to live at the ranch of John Watson who, in the spring of 1871, was also gathering cattle to put on the trail. It seems that Harrison's mother did not want him to go with Littlefield, but was willing to let him go with Watson, if Watson would bring

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the boy home. Littlefield was working the range, gathering his cattle, and had a roundup of 1,800 head penned at John Ellis's place. One peaceful Sunday night, John Watson rode up to the outfit as the boys were sitting around the fire at the tail-end of the wagon, and, addressing the owner, said:

"George, I've come after that damned little yellow nigger you've got."

"What nigger?" asked Littlefield.

"That McClure nigger," Watson answered.

"Well John," said Littlefield in measured tones, "you're not going to have him."

"George, how'd you get him?" Watson countered.

"I got his guardianship from him and his mother, and it was fixed up by Miller and Sayers," came the answer. Watson then lit up the night with his lurid profanity. Littlefield, for some reason, let the insults pass, perhaps because he was not armed. Watson rode off, calling back:

"George, I'll be at your camp at 3:00 o'clock tomorrow to get him, and I'm going to have him."

"I'll be glad to meet you," came the answer from the campfire. Then Littlefield took an old cap-and-ball six-shooter from the wagon and cleaned it up by the light of the fire.

Next day the outfit spread out on the drive, with the "Cap'n," as Littlefield was then called, in the lead. As they threw the roundup into the same corrals, his nephew, Shelton Dowell, and Ham Smith, another hand, were flanking the lead drive in behind him. Holmes, a Gonzales man, who had sold him some cattle, had come out to the pens to talk with him, and as the drive closed in on the roundup grounds, the boys began dropping out to the wagon to get a drink of

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water, because the day was hot and everybody was thirsty. John Watson was lying flat on his stomach in camp, while Ben Mucklerath, the old colored cook, was busy at the rear of the wagon. When Harrison McClure rode up Mucklerath said:

“Harrison, I guess you’re going to leave us this evening.”

“Oh, I don’t know; I don’t think so,” Harrison said. Whereupon Watson rolled over and asked:

“What did he say, Ben?” and when Ben repeated Harrison’s retort, Watson became “awful mad.” He got up and approached Littlefield and Holmes, who sat talking trade near a big tree, off to one side. Holmes mounted his horse to leave, and Watson spoke to Littlefield. No one knows what was said, but Littlefield struck out for the wagon, pulled the old rusty cap-and-ball sixshooter out of the mess box, and went back to where Watson stood. Watson slapped him, Littlefield “hit him back,” and Watson pulled his gun and began shooting at Littlefield. Though they were within a few feet of each other, for some reason Watson missed him, and Littlefield drew his own gun. Two cylinders went off at once, and then it failed to fire.

Shelton Dowell, who was working with the herd, saw his uncle’s predicament and rode up with his own sixshooter, saying:

“Here, Cap’n, take my gun.” Littlefield dropped the old gun and took Dowell’s, but it too missed fire, and he picked up the cap-and-ball sixshooter again. By that time Watson, having emptied his own gun in his excitement without hitting Littlefield, backed behind a post oak tree, and stuck his head out to say:

“God damn, you aint got me yet.” But that was his per-

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sonal benediction, for Littlefield succeeded in getting the old gun to fire, and shot Watson through the heart. Watson slid down against the tree as the herd stampeded from the scene.

Jim Townes, a cousin of Watson's who was out with the herd, came riding up at the sound of the shooting, saw what had happened, and, according to Harrison, cried out:

"Oh Jesus, Lord God, he's done dead!" He struck out at a run to notify Watson's family, some six miles down the road toward Gonzales. Littlefield sent Harrison, with Ben Mucklerath and old man Tom White, to his home, and Jim Bailey took the body to town, sixteen miles away, through a terrible storm of rain and hail, two Negroes with lanterns leading the gruesome way. Littlefield woke up Miller and Sayers, local lawyers, spent the night in their office over the bank, next morning went over to the courthouse to make bond, and then left to take the trail to Kansas.<sup>4</sup> On June 22, 1871, the grand jury of Gonzales County indicted Littlefield for murder, but he was off on the important Texas business of trailing cattle, and trial did not occur until early the next year.

Court was convened late in February, 1872, when the petit jury was empaneled, with Robert Brodnax as foreman. There were two or three Negroes in its panel, for Reconstruction was in full swing. At least one of them was from the San Marcos farm that Littlefield owned, and as they went into the jury room one of the white men said, simply to irritate him:

"I'm gonna hold this jury until we convict Mr. Little-

<sup>4</sup> Harrison McClure to J. E. H., March 25, 1937; M. H. Dowell to J. E. H., January 12, 1939; J. W. White to Brockman Horne, September 9, 1936; Walter Walker to J. E. H., August 5, 1937.

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field," at which the old Negro scratched his head and said, to the great amusement of the white folks:

"I'll die wif you heah befo' you convict Marse Gawge." But the sacrifice was not required. The verdict was acquittal.<sup>5</sup>

The Towneses, who loyally worked for Littlefield for many years upon the trail, the Watsons, and the Coes, it is said, were all related. Phil Coe threatened to kill Littlefield, according to the few accounts still available, but was himself killed by "Wild Bill" Hickok while trailing a herd to Kansas.<sup>6</sup> But the Townes boys continued in Littlefield's employ, and soon life dropped back into the peaceful routine of a well ordered outfit, as these hardy Texans rode in the dust of longhorns strung into the North.

The Littlefield herd was driven by an outfit made up mainly of mature men. Dr. Brodnax, Jim Bailey, Shelton Dowell, Ham Smith, Heyward Hall, Sam McGinnis, D. Siguier, Jim Donnell, Major Littlefield, and three Negroes, Clem Brodnax, Harrison McClure, and Ben Mucklerath, the cook, made up the crew. Dr. Brodnax and the colored boy he had raised slept together on the trail, while Harrison slept between Jim Bailey and Littlefield. The two Negro boys were paid twenty-five dollars a month for their work, while the rest of the outfit furnished their own horses and were paid seventy-five dollars—high wages for any cow country at any time.

Their camp plunder and beds were hauled in an old-time wagon drawn by two yoke of steers. Their cook, Ben

<sup>5</sup> McClure to J. E. H., as cited; Gonzales County, *Case Papers*, District Court Records, Nos. 943 and 949; *Journal*, District Court, Vol. D, 398, 474, and 513.

<sup>6</sup> M. H. Dowell to J. E. H., January 12, 1939.

Mucklerath, was a former slave who had cooked on the plantation for Mrs. Littlefield for years, and who lived up to the cow-camp tradition that all cooks were contrary and hard to please. In the division of the Fleming Littlefield property, it seems that Ben had been given to little Bill, but he had been with the family so long that he was thoroughly spoiled. He was finally sent back to the states with Jim Bailey, who had orders to sell him. But old Ben, not wanting to be sold, was too smart, for every time Bailey tried to sell him, he would tell the prospective buyer that he was "orphan children's property," and they, fearing for the title, would not bid on the old rascal.

"You're the awfulest fool I ever saw in my life," fumed Bailey. "I could sell you easy . . ."

"I don't allow for Old Mis to sell Mr. Bill's property," Ben would cut in, and so Bailey had to bring him back.

In spite of his temper and contrary nature, Ben had one redeeming feature—he could really cook, and a man who can cook on the trail can be forgiven a world of eccentricities and sins.<sup>7</sup>

Thus properly equipped with a cook and ten cowboys, besides himself, Littlefield pushed out of Gonzales County and up the trail toward Kansas.

The outfit took the usual course north, out by Seguin, by Austin, Waco, Fort Worth, and across Red River on the Boggy Depot road, to follow the tried trail, fairly beaten and proven since 1867, that led across the Indian Territory and past the infant town of Wichita, Kansas. They had to

<sup>7</sup> Harrison McClure, September 22, 1935, and January 14, 1938. Mucklerath followed J. W. White to New Mexico, returned with him to the Mason country, and at his death was buried by Mr. White, at Mason. J. W. White to Brockman Horne, September 9, 1936.



swim the Red River. One of their horses hit quicksand and sank out of sight, and they got the remuda across—two extra horses around—on the ferry.

Although the Indians made the usual demand for beef, they were not really bothersome, and the long days of riding beside the trailing cattle passed without incident, though Little Bill Sedbury, from the Gonzales country, whose trail herd was just ahead of them, was killed by one of his own men. His father sent a man up from Texas to take the herd on. But there was little excitement as these spirited men plodded on beside their placid herds. At last, they crossed the Kansas prairies and bore down on Abilene, the greatest range market in the Western World.

Twenty miles out from town Littlefield left his cattle under herd and pushed on to look for a buyer—pushed on across twenty miles that seemed covered with an almost continuous day-herd, as other drivers from Texas were there in large numbers ahead of him. Four days later he brought out a “sporty looking” man, a Mr. Savage, who bought his herd at from forty to fifty dollars a head. He turned over the

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cattle, bought a little spring wagon, and put a man named Ferguson on the driver's seat to bring it back home. Then he and some of the older men "caught the cars" and went by rail to Houston, and on to Gonzales by stage. He was anxious to get the Watson trouble settled, for he had learned that there was money to be made on the trail, and he wanted to give his entire attention to the business.<sup>8</sup>

He paid off his debts at once, thereby liquidating the burden of interest—a load that he lifted but never forgot. What he had learned to his own sorrow he later turned to account in banking, for he had the faculty of capitalizing upon his experience. He drove but this once upon the trail himself; he had more important work to do, and after the first trip he was financially able to hire the trailing done. Hence his first job was to build a working organization upon which he could rely. In 1872 he went into partnership with J. C. "Doc" Dilworth, a Gonzales schoolmate with whom he had bunked during two years of the Civil War. He kept John Townes on the trail for years; Shelton Dowell, J. W., Tom, and Phelps White, his nephews, were soon actively engaged in his affairs; and they, with Rufc Walker, I lam Smith, Jim Roberts, and Dun Houston, were soon drifting his herds half across a continent.

Gonzales was the home of bold and reckless spirits who would drive a long trail and fight a hard fight. Trail hands who would venture life and limb for the safeguarding of cattle were then not hard to find. They rode not for money alone, but for an unsung glory in their horses and their work; they struggled not for security but rode high on a

<sup>8</sup> Harrison McClure, as cited; Littlefield, "Autobiographical Sketch," 3; J. Phelps White to J. E. H., March 2, 1933.



*"They rode not for money alone . . ."*

free and happy life; they fought not simply for stock, but because of a lusty love of battle. Here about was one of the nerve centers of the cow country.

Gonzales reflected the life of the trail in a business way. Not only the local trail outfits, but others from farther down the coast, toward the Rio Grande, swung by the old town to load out at Peck and Fly's store, buying enormous bills of goods on credit, and never, in the memory of one of its owners, violating the credit so freely extended even to drivers far from home.<sup>9</sup> Plantation owners and cowmen whose names became as common as their cattle on the ranges of the West made the town their home. Dun Houston drove a Littlefield herd in 1872, and later Bob Houston joined the Major in some speculations upon the range and trail. He was a happy-go-lucky fellow, always playing jokes on everybody, but a big operator both in Texas and on the trail. His principal ranch was across the river from Gonzales, but in 1881 he built a big house in town, had his famour steer cast in metal, plainly branded with the T 41, and mounted it on

<sup>9</sup> W. M. Fly to J. E. H., May 18, 1935.

the peak of his roof as a weather vane. Charlie Walker, who drove for Houston on the trail, said that this old steer, just like those on the range, "always had his head up smelling the way the wind come." Though Bob Houston died in the 1880's, and his home has been destroyed, from the top of the Gonzales fire house his T 41 steer still points its nose into every breeze that blows.<sup>10</sup>

Littlefield found plenty of men who were not afraid to trail, though not all, of course, adhered to a code of high responsibility. Even his brother Bill drove a horse herd of five hundred head to market in 1872, one-half of which belonged to Jim Bailey. With the help of two Negroes, Aleck Stewart and "Big Wash" Littlefield, he drove them to southern Louisiana, and that was the last that was ever seen of the Negroes, and the last that was heard of Bill for many months. By one account, he next turned up at Denver, and was found running a shooting gallery. By another account, his brother, the Major, stepped off a train in St. Louis one day and espied Bill getting off another, carrying the satchel of an itinerant photographer.

"What're you doing here, Bill?" the Major is said to have asked.

"Taking pictures," said Bill. The Major gave him some money to go home on. Sometime later the Major went into Kansas City, where he ran into Bill again, and he was "so put out" that he hired a man, pointed Bill out, and said:

"See this man? He's my brother. I want you to take him home, and don't let him get out of your sight until you get

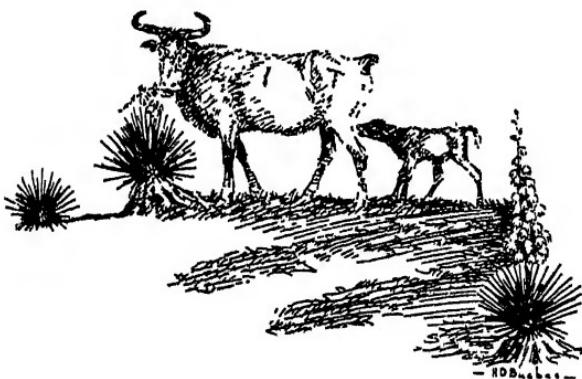
<sup>10</sup> Charlie Walker, as cited.

<sup>11</sup> James W. Roberts to J. E. H., June 24, 1937; M. H. Dowell to J. E. H., as cited; Harrison McClure, as cited.

#### UP THE TRAIL TO KANSAS

him to Gonzales." So Bill came home to his wife and baby in the fall of 1873, after being gone fourteen months "on the trail."<sup>11</sup>

But brother Bill's experience was the exception to the rule. Within five years from his first drive, Littlefield's own herds, systematically scattered "from Hell to Hall River," as the cowboys have it, were in responsible hands. Littlefield was sharing in Indian contracts from the Territory to the Dakotas; he was driving to buyers in Kansas, Nebraska, and Colorado. He was covering a big country in a systematic way, for the cattle trail was not color and glamor to him, but big business, and he always pursued his business, big or little, with tremendous energy and zeal, and nearly always with profit and success.



## TRAIL BUSINESS

UPON his return from driving the first herd to Abilene, Littlefield had definitely reached the turning point in his business life. Unlike most Texas cowmen, he was a businessman first, a cowman next. He had made a quick and handsome profit on his first trip, and he was so fascinated by the business of the trail that he transferred his interest almost entirely from the lush cotton lands of the Guadalupe bottoms to the grassy uplands of the cattle range. Cattle, not cotton, now became his major concern, and the time would soon come when he could count his cattle by the tens of thousands.

His and Doc Dilworth's interests grew in volume until 1876, as long as the partnership lasted. Dilworth died in 1877, but Littlefield kept his own outfits on the trail until 1884, when he quit and took to the rail.<sup>1</sup> Throughout his fourteen years of driving and trading, he had been tremendously successful. And in view of the general knowledge of the Texas Trail it may be more interesting here to inquire into the cause of success than to follow the details of his growing wealth. In 1873, if it has not been forgotten, the United States

<sup>1</sup> *Ford County Globe* (Dodge City), July 1, 1884; Daniell, *Men of Texas*, 351; Littlefield, "Autobiographical Sketch," 7-8.

#### TRAIL BUSINESS

had a business depression. Littlefield found in it an opportunity, not a calamity. He was out and hustling, and late in July he wrote to his nephew, Shelton Dowell, from Council Bluffs, Iowa:

Your letter has been at hand for several days— But owing to my having to run around so much I have failed to answer till this— In it [I will remember] the warning—[not to cut off more than I can chew well]—And will Here state that my plans are all well arranged and I say to you, as one I love, & wish all fortune—That I will leave this market with \$10,000.00 Profit—Shelt *I need a live man* as a Partner here—Dock does well at home, but Here is the money —And Here is the Field to opperrate in—And let me say farther (and all confidential) that I *need you, Here*—I am satisfied that next month I can buy cattle at Ellsworth at my own figures & Time— Now Shelt I am not asleep—Nor am I in the least deceived— When I tell you This is our Place This is the Place, *and this the winter, for You & I to make a rise in the world*—I say, if I can buy 1000 head of cattle cheap on one years time next month at Ellsworth— I am going to dispatch [telegraph] for you to come— come, without delay— Don't talk to anyone— Pack up, and leave— Bring all the money you can controll of . . . yours as you will find a Place for it here— . . . Here we meet Live, energetic men— and I only want you to assist me and in one year from now we will have made at least \$6,000.00 in cash You will have but little to risk and why delay— Shelt now is the time for us— cattle will be lower this fall than we will ever see them again . . . Write me immediately whether you will come or not.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> George W. Littlefield to S. C. Dowell, July 30, 1873, in Dowell Papers.

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This letter reveals Littlefield's keen ability in the appraisal of business trends, his sense of the proper place and time to invest, and a matter that was of even greater importance, his realization that men, not propositions, make money. And finally, it reveals a business policy which, some years later, he stated to a friend at Roswell, and which his colorful contemporary, Shanghai Pierce, who also made money on the Texas range and trail, put so tersely and well.

"I have only one rule in business: When everybody is wanting to sell, I buy; when everybody is wanting to buy, I sell."

And so in 1873, as everybody, wallowing in the trough of the depression, was wanting to sell, Littlefield bought. Eight years later, with the industry climbing the crest of a historic boom, he sold. Nature's grim lessons last longer than an academic memory; he had learned by experience that debt was onerous, and he had well learned that the time to hunt the high ground was before the flood came down.

Hence when most of his associates in the cattle business had either stampeded over the precipice of bankruptcy, or were precariously milling their fortunes on the ragged edge, he was going into the banking business in order to employ his surplus funds. He continued to make the most of an industry noted for its mobility. Once he had learned the hard lessons of the Guadalupe bottoms, he never thereafter bound himself to a position from which there was no retreat. The open range industry was noted for its fluid and adaptable nature, and Littlefield's plans, like his capital, were characterized by remarkable liquidity.

He handled from a few thousand to as many as thirty thousand head of cattle annually on the trail, moving with



*Shelton Dowell*

his usual energy, and scenting the location of active trade as surely as a longhorn could point his nose into the breeze and find the greenest range. Once well into the trade, he moved with precision from Abilene back to Kansas City, up the river to Council Bluffs, far out across the Plains to Ogallala, on the Platte, and back down to Dodge City, "cowboy capital of the world."

Grasshoppers and drought descended together upon the "Northwestern Country," as Texans then called the Corn Belt, and sent the price of corn soaring in 1873, so that Littlefield retreated from his earlier decision to winter cattle in the Missouri River region, as he had outlined in his letter

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to Dowell. By September he had sold off all of the Dilworth and Littlefield cattle except two thousand head, which he expected to move in the next thirty days, and felt proud of the fact that the firm would "make at least . . . 12,000.00 in currency."<sup>3</sup> And well he might feel proud, for making money, then as now, was largely a matter of wit and energy.

While at the Kansas markets he kept track of his affairs at home. Though he had relegated his farming to a secondary position, he had not given it up altogether, and he wrote detailed suggestions to the folks back home, especially to Shelton Dowell. He listed the varying wages of a large group of hands, advised Dowell on problems of accounting and general farm management, threw in suggestions about the handling of the store, asked his nephew, along with many other things, to "look after" his mother and see that "she does not want for anny thing." He told him to issue subsistence gratuities to others in whom he was interested—but warned "do not put on the profit to Heavy on them—I know they are trifling and will never do much . . . —do not let them have money but goods"—, and so on in meticulous detail.

And as for Dowell himself, and the mercantile ventures that they had in common, he admonished him to "try and hold all the cash trade you have already got . . . If we can keep it up for five years then we will be able to do something larger— But do not lets get impatient. Economy—industry, guided by good judgment, will bring all things right for any one. Be honest, and upright—Keep out of bad habbits And your friends will love you—" Not a bad philosophy of life for any man to evolve from experience and reflection.

<sup>3</sup> George W. Littlefield to S. C. Dowell, September 5, 1873, in Dowell Papers.

## TRAIL BUSINESS

Littlefield's speculations in cattle were heavy and scattered, and his head was full of ideas for the handling of herds. In the middle of the summer of 1875 he summarized his activities in another letter to Dowell from Omaha. At that time he had 6,400 cattle on hand that he "had to sell," interest therein being held by Dilworth, Anderson, and Gus Walker. Expecting cattle to be very cheap at Ellsworth and Wichita that fall, he was planning to winter a herd on grain in the Corn Belt, if Dowell would come up and look after them. Two-year-old steers could be bought at ten dollars around, they could be carried "through the winter for \$3.50 Per Head," and sold at from \$22 to \$25 the following year, "which you see leaves quite a nice Profit."

He was not only anxious to "do something" for Dowell, one of his most promising nephews, but he was reluctant "to go into it with Dock [Dilworth] for—you see that I would have to stay up Here all the time—away from my business—while He would Have all of His well attended to." Winding up with his affection and love to many members of the family whom Dowell might see, and the observation that he had "little time to be wasted away," he was off again.<sup>5</sup>

Though he had many partners in passing investments, such as herds handled for a season on the range or trail, he relied at this time mostly on Doc Dilworth, who, with Hugh Lewis, looked after the Dilworth, Lewis, and Littlefield mercantile business at Gonzales, and traded in cattle on the side. There was little money in the country, goods were sold on credit, and the buyer might settle at the store with a herd of

<sup>4</sup> George W. Littlefield to S. C. Dowell, April 5, 1875, in Dowell Papers.

<sup>5</sup> George W. Littlefield to S. C. Dowell, July 6, 1875, in Dowell Papers.

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cattle. When the owners bought a herd outright, instead of paying in cash, they credited the cowman for the amount of the sale upon the store books, the herd not to be paid for until after Littlefield's return from the trail in the fall. If by that time the seller had not traded out the full amount, the balance was paid in cash, on demand. The merchants bought their cattle "right" at home, being thoroughly advised as to the northern demand, and profited from their sale besides gaining another profit on the goods that their creditors took in settlement, thus making money at both ends of a transaction.<sup>6</sup>

Ike T. Pryor and Major Seth Mabry, of Austin, sometimes figured as partners in Littlefield's deals, while Doc Burnett of Gonzales was often associated with his operations. After his return from the trail in the fall of 1871, Littlefield bought a house and lot in Gonzales and moved to town, and as the decade of the seventies grew in age, his affairs grew too, keeping him more and more away from home.

At this time Seth Mabry was a big operator in the cow country. He bought cattle in southern Texas, contracted his herds to buyers in the North, and delivered them wherever the buyers directed. He was a small man, popular with the ladies and beloved by his men, who grew a full beard in the early seventies and kept saying he would shave when he had made a million dollars. He was a fine cowman and deserved a good shave, but like many another who tied his wagon to an open-range star, the rough road to fortune

<sup>6</sup> J. W. White, of Mason, a nephew of Littlefield's, worked in the store and has given the details of their business methods. White to Brockman Horne, September 9, 1936. Also J. P. White to J. F. H., March 2, 1933.



*Seth Mabry*

upset his plans. He was at the business early, and in the middle eighties he was done.

In 1883 he moved to Kansas City to be at the center of the cattle trade. On the first of February, R. H. Crosby, one of his trail bosses, left Goliad with 3,600 big steers that Shanghai Pierce had put up, and drove them to North Dakota to feed the Sioux Indians, delivering them in the middle of October. Mabry made a lot of money on them, and when Crosby saw him again his bank account was high and he was feeling good.

"I've done bought the razor!" he said. But in the rhythm of the seasons, deep snows follow the open winters, drought

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and short grass alternate with the belly-deep feed, and cowmen have their ups and downs.

Some years before, Bob Houston, of Gonzales, had put up a herd for Mabry, J. D. Houston, and Littlefield. They drove it to the Pease River, south of Doan's Store, and established a ranch, using the Mallet and the LIV brands. Mabry, with Littlefield and Perry Lewis, was also interested in a ranch at London, on the Llano River. Then, in the early eighties, he, Littlefield, Pryor, and Bud Driskill put some twenty-six thousand head of cattle in the Indian Territory. In 1885 President Cleveland issued his famous order for the cowmen to pull out of the Indian country, and in a hurry. The ranges were crowded, and it always takes time to move cattle "right." But, as the cattle industry had been booming for several years, fresh range was hard to find, and time was not allowed. So these cattle were thrown across the North Fork of Red River, into Greer County, where the Texas fever hit them, a bad winter came on, and they died like rats with the plague. R. H. Crosby said that he could almost have walked across the range on dead steers—and Crosby was a short-gaited cowpuncher, not a giant in seven-league boots.

That move and that winter spelled ruin for the range; with the dying herds went the dying hopes of many a cowman, and Major Mabry was among them. Old Charles Schreiner and Littlefield pulled out with whole hides, but all their eggs were not in one basket, all their steers were not on one range. Schreiner, Lytle, and Light saved 1,100 head out of 7,500; Plumb and York got out only 460 of the 7,500 that they had in the Territory. Major Mabry was virtually pensioned by old cowmen friends at Kansas City; he soon lost

#### TRAIL BUSINESS

his mind, his "clean shave" reserved for the future, his razor still unused.<sup>7</sup>

Littlefield did much of his cattle buying himself, though sometimes it was done by Burnett, Dowell, Dilworth, and others. In a day when exchange facilities are at every man's right hand and credit is easy, it may not be inappropriate, historically or economically, to recall the methods of business in a day when honor was dear and gold the only accepted coin of the realm. At that time few held that the seal of a government on a piece of paper was assurance of intrinsic and lasting value; hence men bartered in commodities or demanded payment in gold. There was violence and robbery, theft and murder—nature was searing men's souls with the livid fire of bitter experience, and teaching them not only a high regard for the integrity of gold, but a vivid realization of the owner's right of possession.

Illustrations are too numerous simply to be casual: C. C. Slaughter packing saddlebags of gold across chaotic Texas from the sale of a herd at Shreveport, just after the war; Goodnight with thousands of dollars in gold on a packsaddle, coming down the trail to the Texas frontier in 1866; Littlefield, as a boy, crossing Arkansas and Texas alone with a fortune in gold and a larger one in slaves; and many a man buying herds throughout Texas in the seventies, pitching bags of gold around like sacks of salt.

Cattle were cheap, but when Littlefield struck out to buy a herd away from home he sometimes had to take many thousands of dollars in hard money with him. In 1877, one of his most active years on the trail, he drove his brand-new

<sup>7</sup>R. H. Crosby to J. E. H., March 4 and August 4, 1937; Bill Walker to J. E. H., August 7, 1937.

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Hind's buggy up to the Gonzales store and had two big sacks of silver and gold loaded into it. Shelt Dowell and Jim Roberts accompanied him, horseback, and, according to Roberts, it took three Negroes to load the money. They struck out to buy a herd in Wilson County, but the money and the Major mashed the buggy springs down on the axles, and the boys had to pick up some weathered cow bones and push them under the springs to support the load. They received the herd, spread a blanket on the ground, poured out the money, and the Major paid each cowman in cold cash.<sup>8</sup>

Gradually they improved their financial technique. Once Littlefield and Will White, a nephew who was associated with him for over forty years, went down to Cuero, toward the coast from Gonzales, to collect a herd from various and scattered owners. Of course currency was unacceptable, and Littlefield had the bottom of his buggy reinforced to keep from breaking it down with coin. He wrote in advance to Runge & Company, at Cuero, to hold all the gold and silver they could spare, and, leaving one morning early, he and White drove into Cuero, twenty-eight miles away, that night. Runge & Company sent out a Negro porter, who carried their sacks of gold and silver into the office and pitched them on the floor.

Next day, Littlefield received two thousand head of cattle from various owners, issuing a receipt to each cowman showing how much was due him. After the cattle were delivered, the sellers rode in to where White and the Runge clerks were counting the metal out in twenty-dollar stacks, and, with morrals on their arms, presented their slips of paper, and had the money shoved out to them. They dumped

<sup>8</sup> Jim W. Roberts to J. E. H., June 24, 1937.

#### TRAIL BUSINESS

it into the bags, "threwed it on their horses," and rode off to bank the hard metal to suit themselves.<sup>9</sup>

Once Doc Burnett left Austin with \$34,000 in gold tied on one of three loose pack horses that he was driving before him, and was almost into Mason on a cattle buying trip when he lost his horses in the brush and timber. Naturally, Doc was a little worried, but Christy Crosby, who was helping him buy, said he would send Nigger Murphy out to find the horses. Soon Nigger Murphy brought them in with the gold intact—about as successful a job of wrangling as Doc or anyone else could want—and business proceeded as usual.<sup>10</sup>

Such conditions as these, plus interest rates of 2 per cent monthly, were natural inducements to banking. Littlefield had experienced both the inconvenience of carrying metal and the burden of interest, and it was not unnatural that he should not only seek the remedy for the one, but attempt to profit by the other. Miller and Sayers had been doing a small banking business in Gonzales since 1868, but they could not meet the needs of the country. One day a grocery drummer who had collected five thousand dollars in gold at Yorktown drove up to the front door of the Dilworth, Littlefield, and Lewis store, threw his money out like a sack of corn meal, and said: "I want you to put that in the store there." Next day he came by to inquire of the Dilworths: "Haven't you got some money in New York?" It happened that the Dilworths did have money on deposit with Swenson, Perkins and Company, in that city, and they so informed him.

"Give me exchange for this five thousand dollars," the drummer said, indicating the box. Will White recalls that

<sup>9</sup> J. W. White to Brockman Horne, September 9, 1936.

<sup>10</sup> Bill Walker to J. E. H., August 5, 1937.

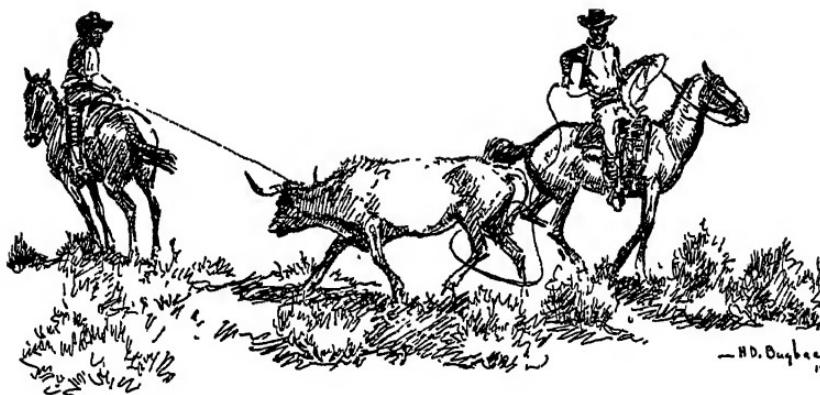
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they charged him a dollar a hundred for it. That seemed profitable, and from then on they added banking to their mercantile activities, keeping money in the store in an old safe that was opened with a large key. In time, they added a rail to fence off their "office"<sup>11</sup> and make a "cage," and began banking in accepted style, though the Runges of Cuero had preceded them by many years.

As soon as his herds were bought and the financing arranged, Littlefield threw them onto the trail from Texas. In 1877 he had twenty-three thousand head of cattle on the trail, but a number of men shared in the business. One herd, owned by Dilworth, Littlefield, and Shelton Dowell, was put in the Cross L road brand, and driven by Andrew Wheat. With this herd went young Phelps White, the Major's most cherished and dependable nephew. Dilworth and Littlefield had two other herds, between them, in the HIL road brand. Littlefield and J. D. Houston had cattle in the VI road brand, and John Jeffries and Charles S. McCarty were driving for them. R. A. Houston, Dilworth, and Littlefield had two herds in the Mallet road brand. They were driven by George Hodges and Bud Mayes. Besides these herds, Littlefield owned several others individually. But before these cattle reached Kansas he had bought out all his partners except J. D. Houston, and he bought him out just after the cattle arrived in Kansas.

All these herds were within a day's drive of each other, and most of them were to be delivered at Dodge City, and farther north, at Ogallala. As soon as they were well on the trail Littlefield struck out for Kansas City and the centers

<sup>11</sup> J. W. White to Brockman Horne, September 9, 1936; Harrison McClure to J. E. H., September 22, 1935.



*Ropin'*

of trade to take the pulse of the market; then he swung west to Dodge City to meet his drivers, to fill contracts he had made for deliveries, and to sell stuff that he had not yet contracted. As soon as the herds crossed the Arkansas River he began cutting out the heaviest steers, throwing them into separate herds, and trailing on to Ogallala to meet contracts there.

The Cross L herd was pushed over the Colorado River at Webberville, below Austin, on Easter Sunday, 1877, and on the ninth day of June it and the other herds were camped about a mile apart, near Dodge City, on the north side of the Arkansas, when a sleet and rain storm hit them. Nothing chills a South Texan's ardor for duty like a norther of the High Plains, and several of the men quit the herds to seek the warmth and cheer of Dodge City. The cattle began drifting in the storm, and, as Littlefield was in town, Hodges, the trail boss, said to Phelps White: "You lope down and tell Cap to send us some more men, or these herds are going to get together." His outfit was so close to town that White could hear the fiddles playing in the dance halls at eleven

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o'clock in the morning—Dodge danced day and night—and he got there in a hurry and soon found Littlefield. The Major grabbed a horse from the livery stable, where he always kept one or two for his own use, rode out and joined the outfit, and they succeeded in keeping the herds apart.

One of these herds was sold to David T. Beals, and went up the river to the LX ranch at Deer Trail, Colorado. Another went to the LX ranch on the Canadian, in the Panhandle of Texas, which had just been started. Other herds went to Ogallala, and an unsold bunch, which the Major decided to winter, was sent south in the fall, under Charlie McCarty, to establish the LIT ranch, at Tascosa, on the Canadian. As soon as the selling was done, the Major and Mrs. Littlefield, who often accompanied him out west of Kansas City and put up at the Drover's Cottage, as at Ellsworth, made a vacation trip into Wisconsin.<sup>12</sup>

So little that is genuinely feminine comes down to us with traditions of the trail that Mrs. Littlefield's observations are particularly interesting. In 1873, from Council Bluffs, Iowa, she wrote back to Texas hoping that she and her husband might go "whirling into Gonzales this fall in the cars . . . I declare it is awfull that we have been deprived of so many blessings which the cars would bring." The fresh apples and pears in the stalls impressed her. "I am as much pleased to have white girls and boys to wait on me now as I ever was to have darkies," she wrote. She thought especially of the sweltering summer weather of Gonzales, and "how hard living was there" without "a single iced soda or plate of ice cream." And to impress the home folks with the luxury of the life she and Major Littlefield were leading in Omaha, she

<sup>12</sup> J. P. White to J. E. H., March 2, 1933; see Dowell Papers, for details.

#### TRAIL BUSINESS

added: "Some days we would drink three glasses of soda."<sup>13</sup> This "travel" and "ease" was luxury indeed, for only four years before she and her husband were living on "only . . . about one hundred and fifty dollars a year."<sup>14</sup>

There were bother and worry, of course, and especially for one who, like Littlefield, adhered to a rigid routine of business discipline himself, and at the same time hoped for general prosperity for all his kith and kin, and, with paternalistic affection and concern, was determined that they should have it.

Even when attending to the pressing business of the trail, he found time to plan the fortunes of a multitude of kinsfolk, and to write them what they "ought" to do and what he would help them do. The fact that they did not do what he wanted done was usually his immediate despair and their later financial loss. But he could be hard when the occasion demanded, and he had early learned to be completely practical in meeting the vexations of life. Hence when Shelton Dowell was attacked by one of his own kinsmen by marriage and was almost cut to death, Littlefield, hearing the news while off at the market, and thinking much of Dowell and not much of his antagonist, with calculating care, wrote him what to do:

I am sorry you did not have a Pistol and Shoot the Cowardly Devill down at [the] time. As it is now of course you have to be very particular and have the Law on your side—In other words: you will *have to*

<sup>13</sup> Alice Littlefield to S. C. Dowell, September 28, 1873, in Dowell Papers.

<sup>14</sup> George W. Littlefield to John Dowell, June 25, 1869, in Dowell Papers.

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*wait until* He does something that will be as evidence that He would take for the advantage of you before you can hurt Him. It would be a good thing to get the Drop on him as He did you and give it to him. But then the Law would be against you and would cost you a good deal of trouble to get out of it—So I would be very cautious, do nothing, Say nothing, that would be evidence against you. I would get out a suit for Him, and have Him arrested. Let it cost him as much as possible, to get out of this scrape.<sup>15</sup>

This is the caution of a careful but none the less determined man—of a man who followed the trail of longhorn cattle as a lucrative business, not just as a free and fascinating way of life.

By the early eighties Littlefield saw his favorite nephews profitably situated on stable cattle ranges, scattered from the watershed of the Guadalupe, in South Texas, to that of the Pecos, in New Mexico; he saw his own fortune, made on the trail, safely invested under their interested custodianship; he saw outstretched wire, the ownership of land in fee, advancing settlement, and the completion of the rails restricting the use of the trail; he saw the margin of profit on driven cattle shrink with the stocking of the northern ranges; and he saw —long before most of the others did—that the time had come to quit the speculative end of the business. At Dodge City in 1884 he unburdened himself with this observation:

I am tired of the trail. This year will be my last. In the future I will ship by rail. The annoyance of crossing the Indian reservation and getting through

<sup>15</sup> George W. Littlefield to S. C. Dowell, July 23, 1880, in Dowell Papers; M. H. Dowell to J. E. H., January 12, 1938.

## TRAIL BUSINESS

the settled up portion of the country with our cattle is enough to drive a man crazy. A couple of years ago, while coming through the Indian nation, those cursed aborigines surrounded my herd and demanded a large number in bounty. My men resisted them for awhile but on the representation of the army officer in charge that he would see me paid by the government, I allowed them to drive away a few thousand dollars worth of animals. But the government has never paid me. I shall be but happy to take to the rail in the future.<sup>16</sup>

This was Littlefield's measured judgment after fourteen years of lucrative business on the trail, as the star of prosperity set over Dodge City, one-time "cowboy capital of the world."

<sup>16</sup> *Ford County Globe*, July 1, 1884.

## CHAPTER SIX

### TOWARD TASCOSA

UNTIL 1877, Littlefield had carried the entire burden of the management of his range and trail interests on his own shoulders. Of course, he had his foremen, but no subordinate moved under him to assist in co-ordinating the far-flung interests that he was developing. The physical exactions of such large-scale operations, especially in that day of limited communication and slow travel, were heavy indeed. But the West was a man's world; only the vigorous survived, only the strong did well. Littlefield was a man of tremendous drive and vitality who was able to shed the irrelevancies of life and concentrate all his faculties and energies on the job at hand.

The year 1877 was an active one on the western ranges and proved to be one of the hardest that Littlefield experienced. He had many cattle on the trail, as we saw. The co-ordination of their slow and apparently cumbersome, but nevertheless precise, movements; the maintenance of the vast, individualistic organization that moved them up the trail; the financing of the entire, uncertain venture in a day of dear money and limited credit facilities; and the making and meeting of contracts a thousand to fifteen hundred miles from the ranges of Texas—all required the planning of a man

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of imagination, the thought of a man of action, and the responsibility of a man of maturity, stability, and means.

Littlefield was doing all of the marketing himself, though Charles S. McCarty, one of his trail bosses, was his chief reliance on the range. He wrote that he had "had a great deal more work to do this season than ever before." For, as his herds began pointing down the last long, grassy slope that led over the Arkansas and to Dodge City, he had to be there to meet them, to turn over those that had been contracted, and to sell those that had not. Many men make good cowpunchers, but few have the steady temperament, the measured judgment, and the seasoned experience to make good traders. McCarty was no exception. In the words of Littlefield, "his judgment is not good at trade . . . I have to go it alone." And yet by the first of September he had practically cleaned up his herds, even though he was handling more cattle than ever before.



*"Many men make good cow punchers . . ."*

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He had left only the crippled cattle that he had cut out of his herds as they moved north, his remudas of trail horses, and a good herd of stock cattle that he expected to winter somewhere in the western country. At various times while upon the trail, he had figured on wintering cattle—had planned to carry them over from one seasonal market to the next—but he had never done it. While delivering in eastern Kansas, he was on grass that lost its strength with the first frosts of fall, and to winter there was to hold over on feed. But on the western plains the rich grass of the high country cured and retained its nourishing strength, and wintering cattle there was, and is, another matter. Littlefield decided to winter in the West.

He knew that the winds swept across the Kansas baldies with an icy chill, and as for shelter, there was not then even the proverbial barbed-wire gate between him and the North Pole. He thought of the Texas Panhandle. While not altogether a summer resort in January, it was then a good and unspoiled land. He hired John Hollicott, a Scotchman, whose memory still hangs over the High Plains like the aroma of rich old wine, to scout out a Panhandle range. Hollicott had run into a cowman named Goodrich, from Anton Chico, New Mexico, who was reported to have wintered a herd in the Panhandle and then driven it to Dodge City. He too was a Scotchman, and as Phelps White used to say, "You know Scotchmen are just like two burros. If you put one on one side of New York City and one on the other, it won't be a week until they're together." At any rate Goodrich and Hollicott had met at Dodge City, and while soaking up a lot of other stuff together, Hollicott had imbibed a little information about the Texas Plains. Hence, even if his in-

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formation was secondhand, it was fresher than most, and he was not a bad choice to send in search of a range. Hollicott and Charles McCarty took a pack horse and struck out across the plains to the south, down the trail that the buffalo hunters had made to the North Palo Duro—down the trail that had been fairly beaten by chance herds and infrequent travelers to the Canadian. They pointed their horses south by west and rode toward Tascosa.



In that year there was a definite trend toward ranch settlement in the Panhandle. Two years before, Goodnight had wintered his herd up the Canadian, in New Mexico, had held his cattle during the summer of 1876 on the river, just above where Tascosa was to be built, and then had gone on to the Palo Duro Canyon. In April, 1877, Casimiro Romero, a sheepman and a freighter, came in with a number of Mexican families and established a little village in the blocked-off portion on the Texas map called Oldham County. He settled on the north side of the river, near the mouth of a little creek

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called, because it was boggy, Atascosa, which word the Americans slurred over and perpetuated as Tascosa.

With him came José Urban Lucero and family, Agapito Sandoval, and a widow by the name of Lucero, a relative of Romero's. In a short while, other families, the Borregas, settled across the Canadian on the south side, to start the Borrega Plaza. Within a few months, a store was started on the creek and Tascosa was on its way through a short and rollicky life. At first, "an old Dutchman" named Ike Rinehart came in with Jule Howard to engage in the general mercantile business, but, in a short while, both being individualists, they split their stock and started separate stores. Henry Kimball, another of the founders, quit the buffalo range, with its diminishing herds and fading profits, to build a blacksmith shop on the south side of the plaza around which Tascosa was being built. His helper at this trade was called Bronco Jack, and Kimball soon added to the weight of his profession the administration of law, if not equity, by becoming justice of the peace. He at least performed the inquests and stammered through the marriages, of which the former duty was by far the heavier work. Yet it mattered little, for here men died without too much fuss and without any feathers, and the survivors scratched holes in the clean, wash gravel on Boot Hill, and tucked the bodies away in a sugar or a saddle blanket. Andy Adams, quoting some unnamed source, summed up their substitute for extreme unction quite well, in a country

*Where men lived raw in the desert's maw  
And death was nothing to shun;  
Where we buried 'em neat without pillow  
or sheet,*

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*And wrote on their tombstone short but sweet,  
"This Jasper was slow with a gun."*

And as for the sacrament of marriage, that too, at times, was manhandled in an independent way, not in blatant violation of the proprieties, but as a matter of honest convenience in a land untouched by the grace of God. But if religion was sometimes lacking, constancy and fidelity met, at times, even in a dance hall, and came to glorify a cow-camp dugout with the blessed name of "home." All this and more, in general terms, was characteristic of the land into which McCarty and Hollicott rode when they crossed the last ridge and wearily made their way into the Canadian breaks toward Tascosa.

Yet it is not the town and the people, but the condition of the range and the lay of the land that interests a man in search of grass. In this respect, it might have appeared that the forces that wore down the Rockies to build up the plains had designed their work to please a cowman. Every man's horse, the pride of his possessor, travelled strong and free on the rich grass that haired over the face of that land. Every man that sat in a saddle as to the leather born looked toward the far horizons with a sense of superlative self-confidence and security. Every Texan who swept into that domain of grass, bounded only by the extent of his own immodest desires on the west, the frontiers of Kansas and the Indian Territory on the east, and the frigid zones on the north, felt the spell of its boundless range, the stimulating zest of its invigorating climate, and the breadth of its possibilities for producing cattle. That climate and grass worked wonders with horses, too, even as it enlarged the vision of men. There

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horses grew deep-chested, strong-legged, large-lunged, short-backed, and rock-bottomed. Given time to grow in that country, they turned out to be the sort of horses, in the language of the range, that "would take you there and bring you back." This, too, was lure to a cowman.

The country has changed since then under the withering assault of man. As Littlefield's men rode into the Canadian River valley, the mantle that hung over the far hills toward the New Mexico line was not an approaching dust storm, but the clean, purple haze of early evening. For this was before the plains of Texas were serrated by plows and reclamation terraces; before they were mutilated and torn by iron-cleated tractors that left their gaping marks in the verdant sod—veritable centipedes of destruction. These were the days when the plains were a land of horses and men, of grass and hope.

Hollicott and McCarty turned down the Canadian from Tascosa to scout out the country. The stream was then a bold-running, twenty-foot-wide course of clear mountain water full of channel catfish, instead of a near-mile-wide desert of sand, fogging down a dusty course in pace with the prevailing wind. Short creeks, where beavers chopped up the cottonwoods to build their dams, cut into the Canadian from the grass-grown sandhills on either side, and the broken nature of the country offered sheltered, southern slopes for cattle drifting before the winter winds.

At this time, as various historical studies tell, only two villages had been started in the Panhandle—Mobeetic, on the eastern edge, and Tascosa near the western line. Only three trails crossed the virgin carpet of luxuriant grass—one which led from Dodge City to Camp Supply and on to Mobeetic

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and the military post on Sweetwater Creek to the east; another which Hollicott and McCarty followed from Dodge City to the village on Tascosa Creek to the west; and the third which connected the first two and formed the base of a great triangle on the south.

And as for the social problems of that day, there were practically none beyond the depredations of unhypocritical cow thieves. The land was, in the geography books, simply a part of the "Great American Desert," not—in the booming phrases of the chambers of commerce and the days of "two-dollar wheat"—"the bread basket of America," nor yet, more lately, the "Dust Bowl" of the West, but simply a fresh land unspoiled by the makers of slogans—a land of grass with the right side up.

And so Hollicott and McCarty returned to Dodge City and reported to Major Littlefield. They told him that the grass was good and the people scattered. Goodnight had been there only a year; Bugbee was located in his two-room dugout on the north slope of the Canadian; the LX outfit had just pitched permanent camp on Ranch Creek; Hank Cresswell had brought in his Bar CC; and the Springer ranch fortified the crossing of the Canadian on the extreme eastern edge of the Panhandle. Only a few additional small outfits sprinkled the valley of the river from the Springer range to the New Mexico line. There was elbow room along the Canadian in the late seventies, even for an ambitious Texan. There was plenty of water in short-running streams, shelter for cattle in the breaks, bluestem meadows along the river and creeks, tall red sage grass on the sandhills, and a heavy sod of buffalo and grama on the plains, above.

This was enough. Littlefield decided to go there. Earlier

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in the year he had made some plans. When he was well into his trail work of 1877, he had sensed the trend of the cattle market and had bought out all his partners before the deliveries were made. He turned to Phelps White, his nephew, one day, and said:

"It looks like I'm going to make a pretty good profit. I wonder if you'd like to go ranching with me?"

"Sure," answered the devoted White, "I'll go anywhere with you." Taking him at his word the Major decided to send him to the Panhandle of Texas.

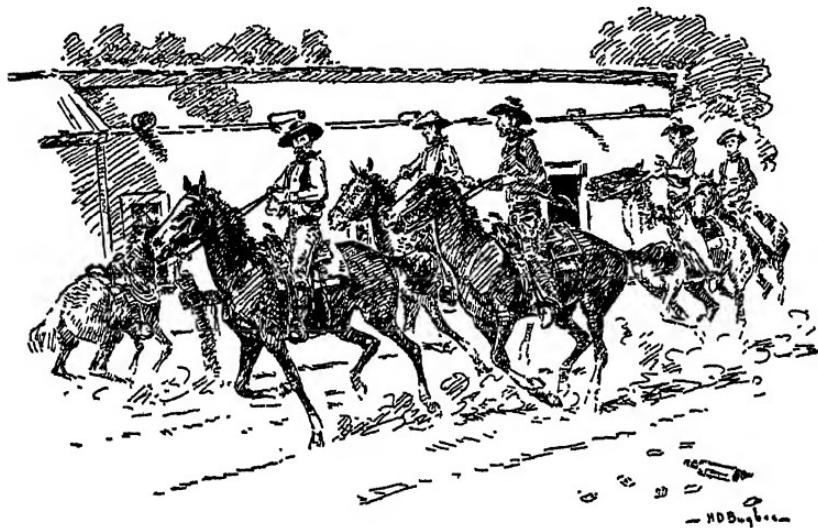
During the summer Littlefield had cut 2,200 head of choice "she stuff" from his herds as they passed Dodge City, and held them in loose-herd on the Arkansas River nearby until McCarty and Hollicott got back. After they had quenched the burning thirst engendered by the long, dry trip, and reported what they had found, the Major added 1,100 head of steers to the cow herd, and with 3,300 head in all the Littlefield outfit left the not altogether innocent diversions of Dodge City and pointed the cattle southward—toward Tascosa.

About forty-two miles out on Crooked Creek they passed the stage stand of old Hoodoo Brown. Hoodoo, whose proper name was George W. Brown, had been a buffalo hunter of parts. He had drinks for thirsty travelers, a homely store for trade, and a personal hankering for cards. He was a colorful character in the days when individualists were considered beneficial instead of inimical to "the general welfare," and he should no more be hurriedly passed on the trail of history than were the cowboys wont to pass him hurriedly on the trail to Dodge.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. P. White to J. E. H., January 15, 1927.

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Successfully past Hoodoo's, the Littlefield outfit pushed on toward Hines's Crossing of the Cimarron, twenty miles below, and then forty miles further to cross the Beaver, and down by the Rifle Pits to Zulu—Jim Cator's stage stand on the North Palo Duro. Thirty miles more put them on the Little Blue, and another thirty-five put their lead steers over the last divide to look down upon the cool shade of the cottonwood greenery along Tascosa Creek.<sup>2</sup> It was a wise and fortunate move into a fresh and unspoiled land, and the dry stock came off the north slope at a trot to quench their thirst,



while the cowpunchers, at the same gait and for the same purpose, headed for the unpretentious 'dobies that made up the town of Tascosa.

Tascosa was just getting started, the first house having been built in April, 1877, and the first store having been

<sup>2</sup> "Log of the Tascosa-Dodge City Trail," Manuscript, W. S. Mabry to J. E. H., April 27, 1928; and J. P. White, as cited.

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opened a little later.<sup>3</sup> About the suggestion of a plaza two stores, a blacksmith shop, and the homes of three or four Mexican families had been built. When the Littlefield outfit reached town, Rinehart had a store on the west, Howard had another nearby, Henry Kimball had built his blacksmith shop on the south side of the plaza, and Pedro Romero had built the only house on the east side. Jack Ryan came in and opened the first saloon, though whiskey was sold from barrels at both the stores. John Cone came later, to get into a squabble with the owners of the townsite, to join with Casimiro Romero in an attempt to move the town down the river to Hogtown, as the lower subdivision came to be called. But he succeeded only in a disreputable sort of way, for the success of Hogtown was limited to the sporting elements of the frontier, while Tascosa clung closely, though not too virtuously, to the clear, clean waters of the Atascosa.<sup>4</sup>

The Littlefield outfit first located a few miles east of Tascosa, on the west side of Pescado Creek and on the north bank of the river, near some rock walls that McCarty had acquired from a Mexican. This site became the original headquarters of the LIT ranch—a ranch and brand to become famous throughout the West. The men turned their horses loose on the meadows, located their cattle on the surrounding, unoccupied range, made a dugout in the bank of the creek, drew their drinking water from the river and their meat, when they wished, from the herds

<sup>3</sup> *The Tascosa Pioneer*, June 12, 1886; C. Goodnight to J. E. H., January 12, 1927.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Henry F. Hoyt to J. E. H., March 2, 1926; J. P. White to J. E. H., March 2, 1933; Henry F. Hoyt, *A Frontier Doctor*, 56; Charles A. Siringo, *A Lone Star Cowboy*, 71.



*"... where cattle ranged and often mixed with the buffalo"*

of buffalo on the plains above, and went into winter camp in the fall of 1877.

Undoubtedly these South Texas cowpunchers were impressed by the strange new land that sometimes seemed to shimmer in the mirages around them—a land tremendously different from that from which they had come. No oppressive humidity imposed a natural restraint upon the energies of men, but in this high, dry country life was strung to a tighter tension, and men were charged with a restless, nervous energy that drove them at a faster, almost a furious, pace. Besides the climatic difference, there was the freedom of the frontier, and a breaking of many of the bonds of propriety that cramped some men in a settled land. The difference extended even to the appearance of the men and the equipment of an outfit, and Littlefield's observation on the subject in general was particularly applicable to the Panhandle frontier, which his outfit was now helping to occupy. He said:

"When a roundup was made every cowboy had his arms. . . . Of course, this was confined to the unsettled

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country where cattle ranged and often mixed with the buffalo. A herd gathered in the settled part of Texas . . . looked tame as well as the men compared to a western outfit."<sup>5</sup>

M. H. Loy applied Littlefield's description directly to the Panhandle. Loy was a cowpuncher on Torrey's TS ranch which, in 1878, was located up the river from Tascosa. He wrote:

The first years these cowmen payed no taxes and were subject to no law, except six shooter law, but people of the present day could hardly be made to believe how seldom this six gun law was resorted to. They have got their information from picture shows and writers that know nothing about it, and yet it was the law and a very strong and rigid law it was—not that they used them against each other often, but they all carried them and they had a restraining effect that civil law dont seem to have nowadays.<sup>6</sup>

To begin with, the Mexicans and Texans got along very well together. Women were scarce—there was only one American woman in Tascosa when the LIT came in—and the dark-eyed Mexican girls looked like real belles to these vigorous, beef-eating Texans. Dances at Tascosa and across the river at Borrega Plaza were not infrequent, and were attended by the LIT cowboys. Between calls, they often sprinkled the dirt floors of the dance hall to settle the dust, but this placed no damper on their spirits, which ran

<sup>5</sup> George W. Littlefield, in the *Austin American*, January 6, 1918.

<sup>6</sup> M. H. Loy, Manuscript, "Ranching on the Canadian in 1879," files of the author, 1.

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high to the lively melodies of "Goodbye Old Paint" and "Cotton-Eyed Joe."

Jim East, then an LX cowpuncher, tells of attending one of these dances with the LIT boys. A sick child lay on a pallet of sheep hides and blankets in one corner of the room where the dance was held. During the dance an old woman gave it some tea a time or two, and finally, out of curiosity, Dudley Pannell, a LIT cowboy, walked over, pulled the blankets back, and found a child that "was rotten with smallpox." He was slightly taken aback, but as smallpox was rather common there in that period, he recovered his poise and said:

"Well, it's no use to go home now. We had just as well dance until morning." And so they did.

Nine men made up the LIT outfit, and nine healthy men, one a Negro, holed up in a dugout for the winter is enough. There was no medical service on the frontier, and vaccination among the Mexicans, who brought in the smallpox from the west, was almost unknown. McCarty and the entire Littlefield outfit got down with the disease; seven of them were sick at one time. How they managed to come out of the dugout alive is still a question, but they were a sturdy breed. Meanwhile, the epidemic spread. Jim Lucero, who was freighting for Don Casimiro from Trinidad to Goodnight's outfit in the Palo Duro, and who later was a *vaquero* on the LIT, took sick while on the freight trail. Many others came down with the disease, and it was simply a fortuitous circumstance that a doctor was heading that way.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> J. Phelps White to J. E. H., March 2, 1933; W. H. Ingerton to J. E. H., May 31, 1939; Jim Lucero to J. E. H., May 31, 1939.

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Henry F. Hoyt, in his interesting autobiography, *A Frontier Doctor*, records how John Chisum, on the Pecos, told him of the Panhandle epidemic, and how he, a young man hunting experience and adventure as much as medical fortune, made his way into Tascosa. He stopped on the plains to hunt buffalo, but a runner hurried him in to town to treat Casimiro's daughter, whose case had reached the pustule stage. She was suffering the unrelieved agonies of its itching. There were no drugs or medical supplies, and Hoyt racked his brain for something that would give relief and keep the patient from scratching herself to death. Finally he thought of the black gunpowder that every frontier store carried in stock, bought a cannister, returned to Romero's, made a paste of gunpowder and water, and applied it to the girl's entire body; and the sulphur, saltpeter, and charcoal in the explosive gave her immediate relief.<sup>8</sup> He used the same treatment on his cowpuncher patients with equal success.

When the LXs, the LITs, and Jim Kenedy (son of Mifflin Kenedy) who was wintering on the river above, all ran short of provisions, McCarty, the LIT boss, sent Phelps White to Dodge City to get supplies. He left the ranch December 2, 1877, near his twenty-first birthday, and struck out horseback for Dodge City, nearly two hundred and fifty miles to the north and east. It was bitterly cold and he carried only one blanket behind his saddle. At the Rifle Pits he ran into some mustang hunters and spent the night; leaving them hunting wild horses next day, he reached the Cimarron, and the next night caught him on a little arroyo called Spring Creek, where he found that the dead tumble weeds—broken

<sup>8</sup> Hoyt, *A Frontier Doctor*, 55; Hoyt to J. E. H., March 2, 1928.

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from their summer anchorage and rolled in with the winds—had filled a gully fifteen or twenty feet deep. He set fire to the drift to keep warm, and the night was so cold that his horse, appreciating the warmth himself, backed into the blaze and singed off his tail. Next Phelps reached Hoodoo Brown's welcome stage stand on Crooked Creek, and on January 1, 1878, he reached Dodge City with a case of the smallpox. He laid up there until he got well, though the boys at the ranch, still short on provisions, were having a harder time.<sup>9</sup>

As Jim East once observed, some men seem naturally immune to the disease, and have no need of vaccination. John Hollicott, the stocky Scotchman who later was to manage the adjoining LX ranch, had stayed in the Panhandle as one of the LIT hands. He and Frank Wright were sleeping together in the dugout when Hollicott came down with smallpox. As soon as he discovered what he had, Hollicott said:

“Frank, you had better take your blankets and get out. I've got the smallpox.”

“Oh,” Frank said, “I wouldn't desert an old pard for anything like that, and blankets are rather scarce anyhow.” And Hollicott claimed that Wright slept with him during his entire sickness and never took the disease himself.<sup>10</sup> Yet a number of Mexicans died at the plazas up the river—at Tascosa, Salinas, and Boquillas, little settlements toward the state line. The epidemics continued for some years, not without tragic results, but the original LIT boys could now dance anywhere with impunity, and undoubtedly did.

Life on the frontier was made up of more than the weathering of the elements and the light-hearted dismissal of death

<sup>9</sup> J. Phelps White to J. E. H., January 15, 1927.

<sup>10</sup> James H. East to J. E. H., as cited.

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and disease. It was made up too, of honest, human concern for the feelings of others, and sometimes heroic, sometimes pathetic, attempts to master the limitations of distance and time. One such instance had to do with the LX ranch, the immediate neighbors of the LITs on the east. Bates, Beal Clement, and Rosencrans were the principal owners of this brand and this wide range. Some of these men had started life at the cobbler's bench in New England, and had become wealthy manufacturers of shoes. Perhaps cattle should interest any man who loves the smell of leather, and these Bostonians were taking up ranching on a large scale. With nothing but an imaginary line to mark the bounds of their ranges, it was natural that they and the LITs should have much in common.

One day their joint roundup was working the country on the head of the Big Blue—a long tributary that angles back into the plains north of the Canadian—when a messenger rode up from the LX ranch. Erskine Clement and his father, stockholders in the company, were there on a visit, and the elder Clement, so the runner reported, had died. Two or three of the LIT hands went in with the LX outfit to help with the difficult problem of getting the body to the railroad, more than two hundred miles away, as the family did not want the old man buried on the frontier. Erskine Clement had them cut a quantity of the cedar that grew along the river, burn it into charcoal, and pack the body in it. Then they drove by wagon to Fort Elliott, nearly one hundred miles east, where they hoped to get the body embalmed.

There was an embalmer at the fort, but his instruments were "out of whack and would not work." As Fort Elliott was connected by telegraph with Dodge City, the funeral

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escort wired ahead and rushed the body up the government trail toward Camp Supply. "The old man was pretty well thought of," Phelps White said, "and the government started out some loads of ice from Camp Supply and Dodge, to meet him, and they packed his body in ice. Also the embalmer was sent out from Dodge, but by the time he met the funeral procession the body was too far gone. However they put it in a casket and sent it on to his home in Massachusetts.

"Mrs. Clements appreciated the attempts that had been made, and later bought a full set of embalmer's instruments and presented them to Fort Elliott."<sup>11</sup>

Certainly people whose roots run deep into civilized soil feel a strange and powerful revulsion against the burial of their dead in a strange and foreign land. Most of the early fatalities in this section of the country however, were buried in the simple cowboy style; and as for location, they would have agreed with old Cabe Adams in preferring a spot "just anywhere in the state of Texas,"

*Where the coyotes howl and the  
wind blows free,  
In a narrow grave just six by three.*

Similar to this was the end of Dudley Pannell, one of the LIT wagon bosses, who, with Charlie Siringo, had fought milling Littlefield cattle while crossing the swollen Canadian. He was, as Jim Roberts recalls, something of "a rowdy, wild, harum-scarum boy, but there never was a better-hearted human under the sun." It happened that when Oldham County was organized in 1880 the LITs took a prominent part

<sup>11</sup> J. Phelps White to J. E. H., March 2, 1933.



*Where the coyotes howl*

in affairs, and "Dud" Pannell was in town for the occasion. After the election, Pannell and Phillips, another LIT hand, stayed late to get the returns. Of course, if the returns were favorable they would drink to celebrate the victory, and if they were unfavorable, they would drink to keep from feeling too badly in defeat. As they rode out of town and over the divide between the Tascosa and Cheyenne creeks on their way back to the ranch, they began shooting, in a spirit of deviltry, to wake the outfit up.

Pannell's horse was afraid of a gun—most horses are—and shied and jumped when Phillips cut loose with a careless shot which grazed Pannell's head and knocked him off his horse. His foot hung in the stirrup and the terrified horse quickly "drug him to death." And so they buried Dudley Pannell, first-class cowboy from Gonzales, simply and honestly, without unction or ceremony, just out "in the state of Texas," and years later Phelps White erected a stone over his grave. In a short time, another South Texas cowboy, Eugene Wat-

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kins, went there to sleep beside him, peacefully and happily, perhaps, because contemporaneously two Mexicans who had bucked his monte game were planted on Boot Hill.<sup>12</sup>

These were the men and this the spirit that set the tone of open range ranching in the Panhandle of Texas three-quarters of a century ago. It was a far cry to the littered desk at which Littlefield spent most of his later years; but it was these and such as these that founded and maintained the fortune that made the desk inevitable.

<sup>12</sup> W. H. Ingerton to J. E. H., June 12, 1937; Jim W. Roberts to J. E. H., June 24, 1937; Walter Walker to J. E. H., August 7, 1937; James H. East to J. E. H., September 27, 1927.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### "OUTSIDE" WORK

LITTLEFIELD sent his outfit into the Panhandle to establish a ranch nearly two hundred and fifty miles from the railroad at Dodge City, and then went back to his work at Gonzales, more than six hundred miles away. Eight white men and one Negro, he reasoned, ought to be able to take care of themselves, and this conclusion was not the offspring of wishful thinking or of supposition built on faith alone.

Barbed wire had not yet laid its prickly hold upon the land of cattle, and hence there were no fences to ride; there were no wells and windmills to get out of order; and there were no feed wagons to run or bunches of hospital cattle to nurse through the winter. Like the men who located them on the ranges, the cattle either survived or they did not. Most of them did, but in surviving they drifted, sometimes uncertainly up and down the Canadian valley, and sometimes with the utmost certainty southward, their tails to the winter wind. In the first case, the "outside work"—the general roundup that combed the Canadian from Fort Bascom in New Mexico to the Antelope Hills in Indian Territory—gathered the stray cattle and brought them home in the spring. But the blizzards, the blue northers, that "turned their tails to the breeze" and drove the herds southward, gave all the cowpunchers of the shortgrass country "outside" work

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of a different kind. These cruel winds strung thousands of cattle in an irresistible drift across the western plains of Nebraska and Kansas and pushed them across No Man's Land into Texas, while those on the Canadian fled to the broken country at the headwaters of the Brazos, and even to the Pecos.

The LIT riders were conspicuous in a land of hardy riders. Harry Ingerton, veteran of the short-grass country, left the T Anchors on the Palo Duro because they were "too slow," because they "worked like a bunch of nesters," and joined the LITs, who were "real hands." They leant over on their horses, and when a wild steer rattled his hocks and took to the breaks, they "tromped" on his fetlocks and gathered him in with a small, neat loop. Ingerton, with a cow-



boy's pride in his outfit, and with the measured maturity of age, thinks the LIT outfit was made up of the best all-round cowmen in the Panhandle. As he put it, "they were tops." They had always worked with cattle and they didn't know anything else. In the land they came from, as soon as a boy

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was old enough to get his bare big toe hooked over the knee of a friendly horse, he climbed into a saddle and went to work, and he stayed on the job until he was so old and stiff that at times he had to be lifted off his horse.

They thought, dreamed, worked, played, and fought in terms of horseflesh. If, in the language of the Argentine Gauchos, "a man on foot is no man at all," then, conversely, a LIT hand on a horse was a double hand, and at times he needed to be, for when the stinging snow came whistling off the pole, every old South Texas cow thought of the sheltered thickets festooned with Spanish moss, and struck out for home as though she were determined to reach them. First the line riders tried to hold them in the breaks, but if the storm continued, their dark trails soon streaked out over the cap rock, and pointed south toward the Rio Grande. Then the cowpunchers of the Canadian, and the JA and T Anchor outfits below them, loaded their "floating wagons"<sup>1</sup> with chuck, bedrolls, and horse feed, and struck south behind them—floating black specks on a vast wilderness of snow. These outfits drifted down the trail of the cattle, rounded them up, perhaps on the Running Water or the Yellow Houses—headwaters of the Brazos—and, after the storm had subsided, drifted them back to their regular range. This job of floating with storm-driven cattle—of cooking, eating, working, and sleeping in the snow—was "outside" work of heroic nature.

The drifts became so troublesome that the LITs, T Anchors, and others made winter camps in the form of dugouts on Palo Duro Creek, west of where the town of Canyon

<sup>1</sup> Chuck wagons that drifted, or floated, from place to place to gather the scattered cattle.

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now stands, kept winter feed on hand for their horses, a supply of chuck for the men, and there kept watch for the cattle that were sure, sooner or later, to pour over the divide from the Canadian. Harry Ingerton, who was in one of these camps, remembers a storm that struck in January, 1880. He says that within twenty-four hours the LIT cattle began pouring by from the river, fifty miles away. On the trail,



twelve miles is reckoned a fair day's drive for a herd of cattle. As Ingerton says: "they walked all night long—just little bunches of them. They'd walk awhile and trot awhile, headed south. We got on the trail when the wind went down and followed them . . . You could see that black trail for miles and miles in that white snow . . . going straight with the wind."<sup>2</sup>

Naturally, the riders missed some of these drift cattle, and when that happened, the "stray men," or "outside men," were expected to pick them up when they joined the general

<sup>2</sup> W. H. Ingerton to J. E. H., June 12, 1937.

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roundups of the lower country in the spring. Sometimes, however, a cow thief, seeing an animal far from its accustomed range, spread his long loop around its horns and claimed it as his own. When the LIT, LX, TS, and other western Panhandle cattle were shoved over the ridge by icy storms from the northeast, they sometimes hit the sandhills along the New Mexico line and got over as far as Portales Spring, or even, upon rare occasions, drifted on toward the Pecos. Then they were within reach of Billy the Kid and his Pecos warriors, and while Billy seems to drift into almost every western story in late years, and often by indirection, he must, even though apologetically, be admitted here as a part of the legitimate Littlefield tradition.

The summer following the coming of the Littlefield outfit a star route mail line was established from Fort Elliott to Fort Bascom, by way of Tascosa, and a fairly regular cowboy post took the place of the erratic calls of an old cowman named Barnes who had sometimes passed through to pick up



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letters at fifty cents each. When Copeland, who took the mail contract, fell sick in the late summer of 1878, young Doctor Hoyt agreed to ride his line. On the way back from Fort Bascom one day he met five men.

"They stopped," he said, "as they always did in that day, and the man in the lead threw up his hand in cowboy salutation. He asked me if I was acquainted in that country, and I told him 'somewhat.' I noticed that he was a smooth-faced boy; the others were more elderly. One of them was old. They had splendid horses and were well-armed. They asked about the country and especially the big ranches. I asked if they were cattlemen."

"We're from New Mexico," was the noncommittal answer of the smooth-faced one, who then added that he had heard there were some big ranches in that section that needed horses, and said that he had some horses to sell. Hoyt told him where the big ranches were and then hurried on to Tascosa with the mail.

Later the five horsemen rode into town, tied their horses to the hitching rack, and walked into Howard and McMasters' store. Obviously the callow, "good-looking, blue-eyed boy, with fine features, a good shaped head, an aquiline nose, and two incisor teeth protruding somewhat," was the leader of the seasoned group around him. They asked some of the same questions there, and then turned and walked out again. A cowboy who had been lounging inside jumped up and excitedly addressed everybody in general:

"Do you know who that was? That was Billy the Kid!"

The older men with Billy were John Middleton, the faithful Tom O'Pholliard, Fred Wait, and Henry Brown. They all went over to Rinehart's, while the rest of the folks

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went into action. The principal cowmen from the western Panhandle, "Outlaw Bill" Moore from the LXs, Charlie McCarty from the LITs, and old man Torrey from the TSs, went into a huddle at Tascosa to decide what to do. They were not long in deciding. With a big bunch of cowpunchers around them, they called Billy and his armed outriders into Howard and McMasters' store. McCarty, of the LITs, did the talking.

"Now here," the stockily-built McCarty said, "we know who you are, and we want to know what your game is down here." Perhaps there was some tenseness, but Mr. Bonney, the bucktoothed leader, spoke up and said:

"Gentlemen, we're from New Mexico. We heard there were some ranches down here that were short of horses, and we brought some down here to see if we could supply you." However, Billy the Kid did not go into the history of the horses, and McCarty and his men, seasoned westerners and having lost no horses themselves, were too polite to inquire as to that.

"If that's so, Billy," McCarty said, "it's all right. But don't try to turn any tricks down here." Billy smiled pleasantly—"he was always smiling"—as if killing men might, after all, be a matter of fun, and gave his word in assurance.

"We're not going to try to turn any tricks. All we want is to be left alone." That broke the ice and was the signal for drinks, except that the Kid did not drink. He became so friendly with Dr. Hoyt that he gave him a horse, and to prove good faith wrote him out a bill of sale to guarantee possession, if not title, and so long as Billy lived such assurance was equivalent to a good and lawful title.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Henry F. Hoyt to J. E. H., March 2, 1928.

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Of course these horses were all stolen stock, most of them taken from old man Fritz, Phelps White said, from up on the Bonita in Lincoln County. But the Tascosa cowmen hadn't lost any horses in Lincoln County, and in such cases they "tolerated" horse thieves—they "let them live," as O. Henry would put it. Furthermore, some of the boys were already talking horseflesh with the Kid's outfit, and were in a fair way to match a race, for the visitors had "what they called a race horse" with them, and the Kid was willing to back him.

"He hadn't been there an hour," said White, "when he matched a race with old man Rinehart's horse, Spider. Spider was a race horse, and we knew it. We didn't mean to beat him so badly at first, but when we found out that it was Billy the Kid, we thought that we'd better beat him good so there would be no squabble. They agreed on a short race and we were not to have starter judges. Fred Wait, a Kid man, and I were judges on the finish. So the Kid and McCarty went down just to see that they got off all right. Everybody could see at the finish that the Kid's horse was badly beat, but Fred Wait claimed a foul, and said his horse came out six or eight feet ahead.

"'If Spider didn't beat him fifty feet,' I said, 'then he didn't beat him fifty inches.' The Kid came loping up about that time, and we explained the matter to him, Fred contending for the foul, now saying that their horse was beat only a few feet. But the Kid settled the matter peremptorily by commanding:

"'Give it up, Fred. We're beat.'"

The Kid and his outfit were in the Panhandle about six months but never made any trouble—never turned "any

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tricks."<sup>4</sup> Perhaps he felt that he had turned enough for the innocent age of twenty, for he dropped into a camp that Louis Bousman was keeping for the LITs, near the foot of the plains, south of the river, and spent the winter sweating the camp, helping with the chores, and keeping his horse and his guns in good shape.<sup>5</sup>

But the drifts of cattle from the Panhandle were throwing too much temptation along the eastern drainage of the Pecos, and the Kid and his men returned to the Fort Sumner country and began depredations on the Canadian River cattle. For a while, they stole with apparent impunity and drove the cattle where they pleased. Meanwhile, Pat Garrett had become sheriff of Lincoln County, had attempted to get help to run the Kid down or kill him, had failed to find it in the partisan Pecos valley, and had drifted down the Canadian to seek the help of the Texas ranchmen.<sup>6</sup>

Torrey, who had suffered indignities at the hands of the Kid, was timidly in favor of the move. But the LITs and the LXs were made up of sterner stuff, and W. C. Moore—usually called “Outlaw Bill” Moore—who ran the LX outfit and rode their horses at a run on a center-fire, California saddle, who roped and dallied with a sixty-foot rawhide riata, who handled the LX men with the precision of a marshal, but choused their cattle till hell wouldn’t have them—Outlaw Bill Moore was in favor of helping. And according to Jim East, one of the regular LX hands, and old Charlie Siringo, more garrulous, there was a reason—but that is outside the story. For him, the proposal of an expedition against

<sup>4</sup> J. Phelps White to J. E. H., March 2, 1933.

<sup>5</sup> Louis Bousman to J. E. H., October 23, 1934.

<sup>6</sup> Louis Bousman, as cited.

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Billy the Kid and his fighters looked like an act of God. Of course, Bill would send some men, and Charlie Siringo was placed in charge of the outfit that he sent along. With him were Cal Polk, Lon Chambers, Lee Hall and Jim East.<sup>7</sup> The LX men left their headquarters on Ranch Creek, almost due north of the site of Amarillo. With a chuck wagon and some horses, they made their way up to Tascosa, and on by the LIT headquarters, which had been moved up to Cheyenne Creek some three miles above Tascosa. There they were joined by the LIT wagon under Bob Robinson, the most noted of the Littlefield cowpunchers, who, as Lon Chambers said, "was going under a consumed name," and Tom Emory, George Williams, and Louis Bousman. Another recruit named Frank Stewart, reputedly a deputy marshal, whose background and connection with the posse has never been quite clear, joined them as they headed toward the Pecos, the land of alkali and trouble.

The story from here on is an old and familiar one: how Siringo at Las Vegas gambled off the money saved for provisions and how they were forced to go through the winter on the grudging beneficence of a hostile country; how they were joined on the Pecos by Pat Garrett and advised of what they could expect in the way of battle; how Charlie Siringo and Bob Robinson, the bosses of the outfits, "turned tail" and headed toward White Oaks with the wagons; how Bousman, Williams, Emory, Hall, Stewart and East—"ashamed not to go with Garrett, ourselves"—cinched up their belts, tied a blanket behind their saddles, and set out; how they fought the Kid and killed O'Pholliard at Fort

<sup>7</sup> Charles A. Siringo, *A Lone Star Cowboy*, 80, 111, *Riata and Spurs*, 64ff.; James H. East to J. E. H., September 27, 1927.

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Sumner; how they bottled the others up in the snow at Stinking Springs, killed the bold and faithful Bowdre there, and captured the Kid, Rudabaugh, Pickett, and Wilson and carried them off to jail at Santa Fe. This is a familiar and more than twice-told tale.

One incident closes the Kid's connection with Littlefield's life—a story that the Major himself often told in later years. Once when Littlefield had five herds on the trail to be delivered to him at Dodge City by the owners, Phelps White came up from the Canadian to meet him. Checks were still not in general use, and Littlefield carried forty thousand dollars in hard coin to meet the payments on the herds. Rather than stay around Dodge City with the money and mounting apprehension, he and White got in a buckboard and drove out some twenty miles from town to camp and await the arrival of the herds. As they were picking up cow chips for a fire, they looked up and saw a rider coming from the south:

"Here comes some rooster," observed the Major. Worse than that, it turned out to be Billy the Kid, on his way to Dodge City. He wanted to go on that night, but upon considering that he would have to ride all night on a leg-weary horse, he accepted White's invitation to get down, eat supper, stake out his horse, and share their bed. So they made the bed out a little wider, and White, the Kid, and Littlefield slept on the ground together. Next morning the Kid expressed his appreciation, saddled his horse, and rode off toward Dodge, leaving them and their gold intact.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Edgar Harral to Hervey Chesley and J. E. H., June 13, 1939.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### LIT MEN AND LIT RANGE

IT should be noted that there is a distinction between the cowboy and the cowman. The cowboy is adept at the actual handling of cattle on the range; a man who can ride, rope, brand, and do everything else necessary in the ranch routine. Sometimes, in the present, the word "cowman" is used simply to indicate the owner of the ranch and the herd, but essentially the word has a deeper connotation than this. It really means a man who is a careful judge of cattle, who knows the fine points of managing them on the range, who can shape a herd for breeding or selling, and who can look at a range or a herd and prophesy the potentialities of either. Hence, among those who know, the designation of "cowman" is a rich encomium that indicates much more than the possession of enough money to buy a herd of cows.

Littlefield was a cowman. He had learned his trade on the native range of the cowboy, and he had the long head necessary for success in that ceaseless struggle with the vagaries of the weather, the market, and animal nature with which the cow business is concerned.

The LIT outfit, it should be emphasized, was not made up of tenderfeet. It was a lean and bowlegged outfit. It recruited its cowboys chiefly from Gonzales, where men were

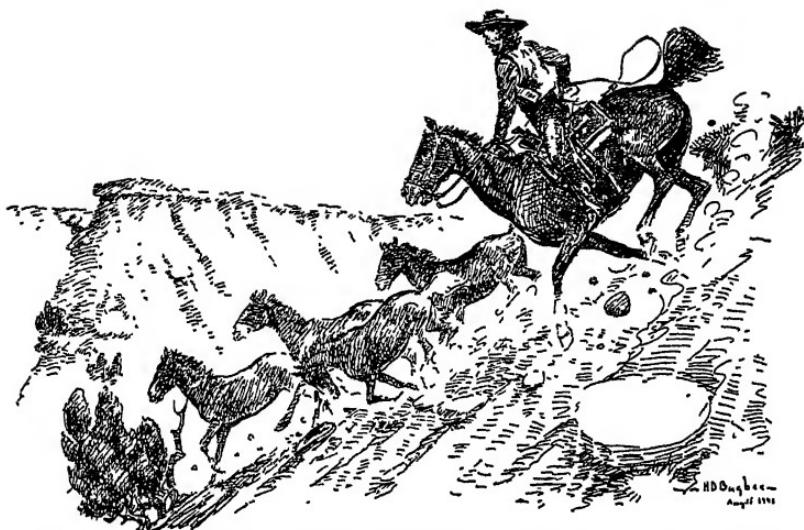
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born to leather and raised on horses. McCarty, White, Pannell, Bud Wilkerson, Bob Robinson, and other seasoned hands from away down in Texas led the drives here, "sapped out" the salty broncs, and gathered the wild ones from the roughest breaks. The man who could ride in their dust would do to take along; the waddie who could "tromp on their fetlocks" was of the best. They had grown up in the business from boyhood, and it made a difference in the way they handled a herd.

McCarty, who was in charge of the ranch, was a swarthy, heavy-set, dark-eyed, handsome fellow who left an indelible brand upon the Littlefield outfits. He was a good man at looking after a herd of cattle, but poor at keeping a set of figures, and while he was reliable and dependable, he nevertheless appreciated the advantage of good whiskey over gypy water. From the deep South originally, he had gone on the trail with Littlefield herds in the seventies, and had brought in the outfit that established the LIT ranch. He stayed with Littlefield for years.<sup>1</sup>

The most noted man on the LIT was Bob Robinson. He rode up the trail from South Texas with a name of hating the Mexicans, and while there were enough in the Panhandle to keep him happily entertained, he never had serious trouble there. Gene Watkins was another cowboy from the same territory, and with the same tradition. Robinson stayed with cattle, but Watkins turned to monte, which, in Tascosa, proved even more dangerous than a maverick brand, and Watkins was buried beside Dudley Pannell at the LIT headquarters. Robinson was a natural executive and a born cowman—Harry Ingerton says the best he ever saw handle a herd.

<sup>1</sup> White, as cited, March 2, 1933; Ingerton, as cited, May 31, 1939.



*"The man who could ride in their dust would do to take along"*

His education was limited, for, as he casually explained, he had attended school only from "books to recess," when he got into a fight with a schoolmate, hit his teacher with a badly aimed brick, and then jumped on his horse and took to the schooling of the range.

At a roundup on the Canadian he stood down "Outlaw Bill" Moore, the LX boss who had built a reputation for killing horses and men. After Littlefield sold the LIT, Robinson became manager of the range, but started a stray herd of his own with the co-operation of the general manager, sold it out later, went to Arizona, eventually returned to the plains, and died a banker and a man of means.<sup>2</sup>

Another man who had a hand in the making of the LIT was J. Phelps White, Major Littlefield's young and favorite nephew, who was learning the business from the grass roots

<sup>2</sup> W. H. Ingerton to Hervey Chesley and J. E. H., June 5, 1939; Ingerton to J. E. H., June 14, 1937; Jim W. Roberts to J. E. H., June 24, 1937; Louis Bousman to J. E. H., October 23, 1934; Frank Collinson to J. E. H., August 4, 1939.

up. Stocky, genial, observant, and conservative, he was in a few years to become his uncle's chief reliance. While still in his early twenties, he took charge of a wagon on the general Canadian roundups—no mean responsibility for a boy. Working with him in 1881, the last year that Littlefield was on the river, was another nephew, Shelton Dowell, who came off the trail and helped with the last branding and turning over of the range. Under these bowlegged riders, cowboys who graduated into cowmen in the true sense of the word, was an efficient crew of Texans who, in spite of the meager fare and the lack of improvements on the range, were proud to be known as LIT hands.

The first headquarters consisted of a dugout on the west bank of the Pescado, which was occupied through the winter of 1877, as we have already observed, by eight white cowboys and Old Cuff, one of the Major's favorite Negro hands. It was not large enough for comfort, but ample for all to have smallpox in and survive. Next year Phelps White gave an old fellow who had married a Mexican and settled near the mouth of Cheyenne Creek, three miles above Tascosa, one hundred and fifty dollars for his improvements, and the headquarters was moved there.

It was an adobe house with Cheyenne Creek running directly in front of it to the east. Its walls were good and thick, its roof of the usual sod, and its walled-in yard behind was a quadrangle high enough for complete protection for saddle stock. The house consisted of three rooms, the southernmost of which served as a kitchen, the middle one as a living and sleeping room, and the north one as a storage space for provisions for the outfit and corn for the horses. Making an L with it, was a shed for protection of the horses. The

whole set-up was planned, it was apparent, with the idea of sensible protection from Indians or other possible attackers. In the center of the "bedroom," where the boys rolled out their beds on the floor of a night and rolled them up again and kicked them against the walls of a morning, was a pole supporting the roof. It was known as "the donation post." Holes had been drilled into its upper reaches into which pegs were set for the hanging of coats, hats, sixshooter belts, and so forth. Cowpunchers are confirmed practical jokers, and when one found a better coat than he had hung up, he simply took it and left his own instead; hence "the donation post."<sup>3</sup>

Outside the enclosure Frank Larqua, a cook of French extraction but not of the traditional French culinary ability, put in a garden and furnished the outfit with vegetables. The vegetables were nice, but as for the cooking, Phelps White said it was a "wonder we didn't all die." Their chuck was a plentiful ration of beef, bread, and coffee, but ordinarily little else. On rare occasions they had bacon, and for fruits and sweets they had an occasional pot of dried currants, "biled" with a little sugar. Usually the sugar they had was brown, which they could use in their coffee if they wanted it, though "not one man in a hundred" wanted it. They were too far from the source of supply to have potatoes and onions, and canned goods were unknown. Harry Ingerton saw his first canned goods in a line camp on the Tierra Blanca in 1883, which—even canned corn eaten raw—impressed him as being mighty good.<sup>4</sup>

Another noted cook on the ranch was Jack Martin, an outstanding character on the range, as cow-camp cooks

<sup>3</sup> Ingerton, as cited, May 31, 1939.

<sup>4</sup> Ingerton, as cited, June 19, 1937.

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usually are. His greatest failing was not his cooking but his drinking, and once when Phelps White came in from a drive and found him drunk and no dinner ready, Phelps was completely and commendably angry, and being hungry besides he "ate Jack out."

"Well, what do you want me to cook?" Jack complained.

"Oh, just a little of everything," said Phelps, as he went back to the herd. Now cowpuncher cooks can be thoroughly literal, and next day when the outfit came in to eat, Jack had one pot filled with an awful conglomeration of food—beans and rice and beef and currants—"just a little of everything," he explained.

On another occasion, Jack Martin was thrown into jail at Tascosa for some minor offense. The county had built a good rock jail, but set it on the Canadian sand, and Jack scratched out under the walls. He went down to Jack Ryan's saloon to quench his thirst and was "recaptured." Since the jail would not hold him, the sheriff tied him to a center post that supported the roof of the saloon, gave him a pair of blankets, and left him for the night. Jack tore up his blankets, made them into a rope, and roped bottles of liquor off the shelves, dragged them up within reach, and was as drunk as a lord next morning. In 1881, however, his happy career was cut short by his freezing to death, largely because he drank too much whiskey while riding in a storm, got chilled, slid off his horse, and failed to make it in.<sup>5</sup>

Though the Littlefield cooks were distinctive, their fare was not. The outfit was never noted for feeding well, nor yet for paying well. The regular hands got from twenty to twenty-five dollars a month, the wagon bosses fifty. Thus

<sup>5</sup> W. H. Ingerton to Hervey Chesley and J. E. H., June 5, 1939.



*"Though the Littlefield cooks were distinctive, their fare was not"*

Major Littlefield's operation of a range outfit was economical, almost penurious; but it was not for himself alone that he saved—he wanted his men and hands to save and do well, too. He was one of the few big operators who allowed them to run brands of their own upon his range, which was always a dangerously tempting pursuit, even for men of average honesty. And, as the experienced Harry Ingerton observed, "the men he believed in he backed to the limit, and made them all rich, and he is the only man I ever knew who did."<sup>6</sup>

The first winter on the new range passed with the cattle running on both sides of the Canadian River, mixing with the LX stuff on the river below, but held in the breaks, as far as possible, by the line riders who patrolled the southern edge of the range that stretched along the cap rock to the south. They had branded L on the right side and U on the left shoulder of the cattle that they had brought down from Dodge, but in 1878 they started the LIT brand and began putting it on their calves, taking the first three letters of the

<sup>6</sup> Ingerton, as cited, May 31, 1939; J. Phelps White, as cited.

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Littlefield name and stretching them out, L on the left shoulder, I on the side, and T on the hip.

In 1878, their range extended about forty miles up and down the river. It took in both banks and as far back from the scattered tributary creeks as their cattle wished to graze, a strip of country twenty to thirty miles across. They clung close to the breaks, however, and made no claim to the country "on top," that is, above the cap rock—the plains proper. They did not want it and left it for the next generation. There were ranges down the river with more abundant water—deeper and longer creeks—but here, apparently, was all they needed. Their range was one of the largest in that country, and though they owned not a foot of turf, they held it all by the right of previous appropriation and the generous code of the open range.

They watched over this vast area of some thousand square miles with only two camps besides their headquarters—one at Mitchell Canyon and another at Tecovas Springs, both on the south side of their range. Usually an outfit of this



"... the LIT hands were among the best . . ."

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size had many camps, but two free-rolling chuck-wagons were their homes in summer—one floating wagon was their cold camp in winter; and a wagon takes the place of several camps on any range. Moreover, the LIT hands were among the best that ever coiled a rope or flanked a calf, and one experienced hand is worth a whole herd of inefficient men in the highly technical work of handling cattle. No one realized this better than Littlefield, for he once said:

New men, known in the cow camp as tenderfeet, were of little use or benefit in a stampede. Two or three experienced cowboys were worth more than all the tenderfeet. You might use the tenderfoot best in day service and his best place was on the side or swing of the herd, never on the points nor in the rear. The rear cattle had to have careful handling and certain men were adapted to that place. If crowded the cattle would often injure each other by treading on the heels of those ahead and lame them. The tenderfoot until he was properly initiated and trained to the business was simply a filling. He filled a saddle and that's about all until he struck the chuck pile. There he made a full hand and was the butt of all jokes.<sup>7</sup>

When the spring work started, two LIT wagons pulled out from headquarters—one up the river into New Mexico, another down to the Antelope Hills and the Indian Territory line. LIT stray men combed the herds from Ute Creek, in New Mexico, to the Brazos in Texas, and when work once started their cuts were held together and night herding followed day herding in ruthless routine. A dozen outfits were sometimes working together, a hundred men driv-

<sup>7</sup> Littlefield, in the *Austin American*, January 6, 1918.

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ing a vast country at one time and working their drive in several different roundups. Gradually the upper and lower works drew together at Tascosa, the various cuts—the different brands—were dropped on their proper ranges, and the cowboys blew in their wages at poker and monte, and on whiskey and women, in the lower town.

Upon this open range, unhampered by brush and timber, developed the practice of “moonshining.” The drive that culminated in each roundup embraced such a world in itself that a hard morning’s ride was sometimes not enough to complete the “circle.” When they had a long drive to make next day—so long that the cows might be leaving their young calves behind and heading for water before the cowboys could catch and start them together—the bosses sent some of the hands out after an early supper to the far points where the next day’s drive would start. There they staked their horses on grass, lay out on their damp saddle blankets, and, covered with the cool moonshine, slept until daylight sent them off at a long lopé to throw their drive toward the distant roundup grounds.<sup>8</sup>

In the late spring of 1881 Littlefield was in Dodge City with Shelton Dowell, his nephew, who was hopeful of a fresh start in the cow business on the frontier. They left Dodge City with a team and headed south, and though their trip was hardly as bad as the perhaps apocryphal account of that other trip—when one of the Major’s horses died and he drove on in with an accompanying cattle buyer holding up the wagon tongue in the place of the dead horse—it did take seven days’ time and no little patience to reach the LIT. Dowell, writing at the time, noted that:

<sup>8</sup> M. H. Loy to J. E. H., January 7, 1930.

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Our route was a cross what you would call a barren waist of Country hardly timber enough for a traveler to get meals with. The first night we left Dodge we traveled twenty five miles across open prarie and camped, about nine P. M. a hard rain and wind storm came up on us, this lasted until about three o'clock in the morning, when a bunch of mules & horses loose passed right through our Camp this frightened us, as we thought Indians were driving them. We squated behind our wagon with Pistols ready for the emergency. But to our satisfaction they proved to be teamsters horses, though it was not discovered until the next morning. Our Team broke down the second day we traveled, which placed us in a bad fix out on the ball prarie seventy five miles from Dodge & one hundred & fifty from the ranche, Uncle George & myself both were a little low spirited & a little uneasy, But we worked with them and made it in a couple of day's to a ranch 70 miles from this one [the LIT], there we hired the best team that they could furnish . . . I am very tired from the seven days journy over the plains.<sup>9</sup>

Littlefield was pleased with the way his cattle had wintered, and immediately made plans to start a herd of beeves to Hunnewell, Kansas.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, Dowell fell in with the branding outfits, and early in June reported that Littlefield had sold one thousand beeves for \$23.50 a head, to be driven to Hunnewell. Dowell interspersed his calf branding with mental speculations concerning the cow business in the Panhandle, and wrote home that "If Uncle Geo and I can make the arrangements for me to use \$20,000.00 Dol. I

<sup>9</sup> S. C. Dowell to Mrs. Dowell, May 13, 1881, Dowell Papers.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, May 17, 1881.

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will invest it in Cattle and put them up here on the ranche and will not return until in the fall." After diverging to inform his wife, awaiting her cowpuncher husband's return in Gonzales County, at the lower end of the Texas Trail, that they expected to brand forty-five hundred calves that season, he reverted to the subject of profits with the enthusiastic observation that "This is the fastest money makeing business I ever was in If I can make the arrangements I want to in four years I can clear 20000.00 Dollars." But he added, "It is a rough life. during this round Up we have had one mans arm broke and shot three times in a dificulty. he is not expected to live. other wise every thing has passed off perfectly smoothe. In our Camp we have had nothing but peace to rain."<sup>11</sup>

It was a flattering prospect to a cowboy who wanted to launch out for himself, and an intriguing financial prospectus even for the average businessman. And yet the very appeal to outside and extensive capital interests, the dynamic nature of the American pioneer economy, characterized at this stage by abundant energy and means, coupled with the invention of wire and the development of windmills, wrote one sure word upon the horizons of the future that the farseeing eye could read, and that word was "change." Though he has left no commentary upon the period, it is certain that Littlefield grasped the significance of the trend; that he knew the way the wind was blowing. At least, by the first of June he had decided to start another ranch in New Mexico, and had plans to send McCarty to the Pecos with two thousand yearling and two-year-old heifers.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> S. C. Dowell to Mrs. Dowell, June 4, 1881, Dowell Papers.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

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Naturally, this was before the days of wire enclosures, and few outfits were bothering to buy the range. But Gunter, Munson and Summerfield, who had the T Anchor Ranch on the Palo Duro, near the site of Canyon, and who were plastering the Panhandle with scrip bought from widely scattered holders, or located for any and all on the basis of shares, were trying, and successfully, to find a market for Panhandle land. By 1880, the signs of another day in methods and practice were plainly in sight, and some men were preparing to meet it.

Gunter, Munson and Summerfield were a firm of surveyors, land locators, and ranchmen who had gone into the Panhandle in 1874 and started their land work, and by virtue of priority, industry, and hard trading had virtually cornered the market on watered lands. But there had to be a demand before land could be sold, and with Littlefield the only big cowman in the western third of the Panhandle in the fall of 1877, obviously Gunter and Munson were forced to wait until the country became a little crowded. By the following summer, however, W. B. Munson, of Sherman, the senior member of the firm, had approached Littlefield and McCarty in an attempt to sell them land.

In November, 1878, he and Gunter reminded Littlefield by letter of the fact that they had tendered him 16,800 acres of land at seventy-five cents an acre, "a large portion of which is fine valley soil, and controls all the living water on a large range." Furthermore, attempting to jog him into action, they said that since they had given McCarty the refusal of the lands they wanted some word in answer. If he did not want the land, Gunter and Munson continued, "we shall consider ourselves released from any further obligation,

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and shall probably close a trade with other parties, who wish to buy this range." Then, as to generous terms, they concluded by assuring Littlefield that they could "wait four months for the money, or if necessary could give you a years time and one half the amount at 10% interest."<sup>13</sup>

In January they wrote again, without serious threat of selling the range from under him but tendering their services for the location of "any land untaken," and followed this a few days later with another letter which implied some little interest on Littlefield's part, reassuring him of the cheapness of the lands "at the price asked as they all embrace living water some timber and valley land suitable for cultivation or mowing for hay."<sup>14</sup> But Littlefield was not excited over the threats of sale to someone else, knew something about the value of land himself, and did not intend to go back to farming.

Next year, it seems, Jot Gunter, the younger and dominant member of the firm, made his way to the Canadian while Littlefield was on the ranch, ready to sell him not only the land that "controlled the water," but all of that which joined it. They were both lying in the shade of the wagon one evening arguing the wisdom of the ownership of ranges in fee, and the value of the Panhandle land, which was now offered at thirty-five cents an acre. According to Phelps White, the Major stopped Gunter short with the terse observation that he would just as soon buy the blue sky above them as Panhandle land.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Gunter & Munson to Littlefield & McCarty, November 16, 1878, in the transcripts of the "Gunter & Munson Papers," The University of Texas.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, January 18 and 28, 1879, "Gunter & Munson Papers."

<sup>15</sup> White, as cited, January 15, 1927; Frank Collinson to J. E. H., March 3, 1939.

#### LIT MEN AND LIT RANGE

One is inclined at first to believe that Littlefield's judgment had finally slipped. But the Major knew that in effect the open range was not quite closed, that free grass was not quite a thing of the past, and that when he invested heavily in the Panhandle, his capital would be tied up and his freedom of movement restricted. Major Littlefield was in the cattle business for the purpose of making money, and considering the fact that the next year he sold out the LIT brand and his simple range rights in the Panhandle for \$253,000, neither the historian nor the economist can be quite sure that he would have done better had he owned the land. But the story of the sale of the LIT involves more than a citation of profits, for the balance sheet of the historian should reflect human nature as well.

All life of the soil has its folklore, and even in history, sometimes, when the facts are lacking, folklore seeps up from the soil of the earth—even as alkali rises to the surface from the depths in the low places—to stimulate imagination, suggest a solution, or lend salty flavor to an unsavory diet of facts. And folklore has even touched on the capital structure of cattle. A number of old-time cowmen, reasonably honest and true, have told of the herds that have been counted to unconscionable proportions around convenient hills, to take advantage of unsuspecting Englishmen. The death of a theory may be a tragedy, but the sacrifice of a legend on the cold altar of history is certainly justified, even in the eyes of the folklorist, if the story disposed of is replaced by a bigger one.

Cattle were probably not counted around hills, even to English buyers. The deal was not as simple as that, though it was fully as effective, and it was negotiated by a young

man riding high on the crest of the cattle boom of the early eighties. He had been a railroad livestock agent, and, for a man unbred to the ways of the West, he gathered his herd with a wide loop. This man became purchasing agent for some brokers of Kansas City, Missouri, and in 1881 he hit Dodge City as the flamboyant manager of a number of important cattle companies.

He moved into the Panhandle from the north, and though he was only twenty-seven years of age, the swath he cut through the short-grass country was wide enough to convince anyone that the country was only big enough for the interests that paid his unlimited checks. The greatest of these, by far, was a company of Scottish capitalists with headquarters in Edinburgh. His trail was marked from east to west by sudden changes in the ownership of great ranges. He flashed from the TSs, on the Eagle Chief in the Cherokee Strip, to the Box Ts, with fourteen thousand head of cattle in the extreme eastern Panhandle, through Moore and Anderson's Double H, in the 'Dobe Walls country in the central portion, to Littlefield's great LIT range near the western edge.<sup>16</sup>

This man, it should be noted, was one of those rare individuals repressed by none of the inhibitions of modesty and humility, who emerge to capitalize upon the gullibility of the public during a period of inflation. The western boom of the early eighties was on, and the golden profits of the cattle industry were pyramiding skyward—on paper. At this time the cow country was being widely advertised

<sup>16</sup> For these activities see the *Ford County Globe* for November 1, 1881, and February 7, April 11, July 4, and July 11, 1882, in Merrit Beason's Museum, at Dodge City, Kansas. Also W. H. Ingerton to J. E. H., April 13, 1927.

throughout the English-speaking world, and men with money invested their healthy human interest as well as their hard cash in land and cattle, and the way the profits rolled up on the balance sheets would have put to shame even the most prolific of cows. Certainly the flame of public interest had spread with the voracious speed of a prairie fire in the tall-grass country. Meanwhile, eager promoters stood on the frontiers of western finance and coolly fanned the fire.

The simple rule of success of the long-headed businessman is to have something to sell when the other man grows anxious to buy, and the legitimate function of the broker is to bring together the desired commodity and the man with the capital to invest. It is entirely human for him to want to levy as heavy a fee as the traffic will bear, but when he becomes a trustee for one of the interests involved, then the relationship is clearly changed, and a deviation from the guardianship of the best interests of his principal becomes a betrayal of trust. It seems that this was the position of our particular firm of brokers, as, operating in a wide-open range, their expansive agent drew drafts across the face of the western world.

Briefly, then, as the price of cattle and the blood pressure of the cowmen went up, capital poured into the West from abroad. The Scotchmen had millions to invest, cowmen had thousands of cattle on the books and on the ranges to sell, and the brokers were getting the parties together. The summer roundups were in progress, cattle had wintered well, the calf crop was fairly good, and the West was lush with optimism and long on hope, as the field operator pushed the Scottish holdings to fantastic proportions and eventually came to the unfenced LIT range. Littlefield did not own it,



*"The summer roundups were in progress . . ."*

as we have seen, but until crowding settlement and plastered land scrip gave it value and tied it down in fee, it was his to use or sell, in keeping with the honest and generous code of the open range.

Written upon time's immediate docket were changes bound to cramp his range and style. These changes were suggested by Gunter and Munson's pressing invitations to buy the lands he grazed. Glidden and Sanborn were about to make their practical demonstration of the use of barbed wire by fencing in the Frying Pan ranch, the Tecovas country, and a great chunk of the Littlefield range, on the south. The Capitol Reservation had been set aside in the western Panhandle, as payment for the building of the statehouse at Austin, and plans were under way for the liquidation of the lands and the construction of the building. Besides all this, Lee and Reynolds, post traders, extensive freighters, and ranchmen, had bought the land upon which the LIT headquarters stood, and ranchmen generally were scrambling for investments in land and cattle.

The dynamic power of venturesome capital held the West enthralled, and the inevitable change which it fore-

shadowed was both a threat to and an opportunity for the man upon the ground. How many of the converging details Littlefield knew is not of record, but he must have been thoroughly advised, and he was not so emotionally moved by the storm that he did not know which way the wind was blowing. He decided to sell.

He left for Dodge City early in June, and it was reported on the ranch that he had sold out to Quinlan Montgomery & Company, of Kansas City. The boys expected him back in eight or ten days, but the time dragged with a heavy and hot monotony until finally they heard, early in July that he had actually sold the ranch and would turn it over at once.<sup>17</sup>

When he arrived at the LIT on July 18, 1881, they found, however, that instead of selling to Quinlan Montgomery & Company he had sold to the representative of the Scottish interests. On July 21 he gave up control of the ranch, though the date of final and effective delivery was set for the fall. Thus in the summer he turned over his range and its shrinking boundaries, with all his cattle. His books called for twelve thousand head.

He had just received 1,508 head of cattle off the trail, which were figured in to make the twelve thousand. But they had not as yet been branded with the LIT brand. It happened, at this time, that the young purchaser for the Scottish interests had just bought the Cross L range from the Hall Brothers, on the Cimarron in northeastern New Mexico, and when he came to receive the Littlefield trail herd, he proposed that these 1,508 cattle be put into the Cross L brand.

"You'll have to put LIT on them first," Littlefield replied, mindful of the fact that his books called for twelve thou-

<sup>17</sup> *Ford County Globe*, June 8 and 21, and July 3, 1881.

sand head, that a count might be demanded, and that the final payment on his contract would not be made until later. In the end, however, the Major took payment for 1,508, and would be paid for 10,492 more—twelve thousand head in all. But when the purchaser ran this trail herd out of the chute, they bore the Cross L brand. Of course, at this point, the story leaves the Littlefield trail, but for the men who learned their alphabets by running brands upon the hides of cattle, the rest is simple deduction, as plain as A B C.

It was a short trip from the LIT to the Cross L, in New Mexico, and the 1,508 "Cross L cattle" that were bought from Littlefield made the trip with ease. At the Cross L ranch these same cattle were paid for again by the brokers for their European clients.

Just after he had received thirteen thousand head of cattle from Reed and Byler, at Dodge City, on behalf of his principals, this early disciple of high finance bought a herd from Mark Withers, of Lockhart, Texas, which he was tallying out on July 3, 1882, some miles west of Dodge. When the work was done, he and Withers struck a lope for camp, because a thunderstorm had come up, but before they reached the wagon a bolt of lightning struck them, killed Withers' horse, and tallied the young speculator out for good.

He died at twenty-eight years of age, the manager of eleven large companies and the owner of two others on the side, with a diamond stud on his shirt front and a sixshooter on his hip with which the lightning took strange liberties, and with, according to the Dodge City *Globe*, "a bright future before him." This former railroad employee died in the midst of what was probably the most spectacular splash in range finance that the world has ever known. Perhaps, with

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the proper emphasis, "he was *too* good for this world," and while we do not know the direction he took, perhaps his spirit sailed forth to ride herd on the celestial bodies, or even to tally out the stars.<sup>18</sup>

The story is not folklore, but with all respect to folklore devotees, a historian might still contend that this beats counting cattle around the hill. And finally, in justice to the healthy skepticism of the historian, it should at last be observed that the fate of the fifteen hundred Littlefield cattle is not left wholly to a range man's suspicion or to the debatable assumption of a simple deduction.

Scotchmen could find out what became of a herd of their cattle that they never even had. About two years later Littlefield walked into the old Midland Hotel, at Kansas City, and a young, close-built man in sideburns rushed up and said:

"Major Littlefield, you sold the LIT herd, didn't you? What did you get for it?" Littlefield did not know the inquisitor, and replied:

"Well, young man, I don't know that I care to answer that question. Go look up the records on it." That young man, who became one of the most noted range managers in the West, did look up the records. He followed the Littlefield outfit to Bosque Grande, on the Pecos, where the Major had established the LFDs, and took depositions from his manager and the cowboys. He built up his case, which showed a discrepancy of more than one hundred thousand dollars between what was actually paid for the LITs alone, and what the Scotchmen paid their brokers for the property. He condensed his testimony, called on the brokers and

<sup>18</sup> Mark Withers to J. E. H., October 8, 1932; *Ford County Globe*, July 11, 1882.

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talked about something besides the condition of the cattle on the open range. In the words of J. Phelps White, "They squirmed in their chairs awhile, went into private conference, and came out and paid off the claim and they paid off just like a slot machine."<sup>19</sup>

In the more formal words of a "Committee of Investigation" for the stockholders of the Scottish company, detailing the misfortunes of the shareholders, reference is made to the "gross carelessness with which the Company has been allowed to be plundered," especially "a transaction in 1881 with . . . , when the Directors remitted them a sum of £21,000, as the purchase price of 6,742 cattle and 125 horses, which were paid for twice over, having been subsequently included in the purchase of the Littlefield range."<sup>20</sup>

One thing yet is unexplained. How did the 1,508 head of Littlefield cattle become the 6,742 actually paid for by the canny Scotchmen? In admitting the factual limitations of the historian the writer concludes this story by making one simple concession to "the folklore of capitalism"—perhaps in the broker's office someone counted the herd four times around a convenient bookkeeper's hill.

<sup>19</sup> J. Phelps White to J. E. H., March 2, 1933.

<sup>20</sup> "Report of Committee of Investigation," in files of the author.

## CHAPTER NINE

### THE LFD ON THE PECOS

WHEN the LIT was taken over by the Scottish syndicate, Henry Holstein was brought up from South Texas and put in charge of the range; but Holstein took the last beef herd up the trail that fall and for some reason never came back. Meanwhile, a man named Hudson had been brought in as superintendent, and he was so impressed by the blonde, blue-eyed Bob Robinson, who was just in his prime, that he made him range manager, and later superintendent. In fact, Robinson and Hudson got along so well together that they started a brand for themselves, the T44, built up quite a herd, and sold it to Will and George Chadboune for ten thousand dollars. But when the Scottish company found out that Hudson was thus operating on the side, it sent him over the divide to look for another job.

McCarty left the ranch during the summer and went to the Pecos country, apparently scouting for another location for the Littlefield interests. For some reason, evidently honest cowboy accounting, he was short about two thousand dollars on his books, but in spite of the fact that he could not explain it, Littlefield appreciated the fact that he had served him long and well, and not only disregarded the short-

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age, but gave him two thousand dollars in cash. Now, Mac was a typical cowpuncher, and one report that is handed down, plausible enough in a way, is to the effect that he spent that winter in Las Vegas blowing in his money.<sup>1</sup>

But Wilkerson drove one of the beef herds up the trail from the LIT that fall, while Phelps White, acting as trustee for Littlefield, remained at the ranch pending final discharge of the terms of the contract of sale. After Wilkerson's return in the fall of 1881, the LIT men loaded their saddles and bedrolls in a spring wagon, and with Old Cuff, a Negro hand, accompanying them, went across through the Fort Bascom country to Las Vegas, where they left McCarty spending his money in that pleasant old town, and turned down the Pecos by way of Anton Chico, Fort Sumner, Bosque Grande, and the single house that was the nucleus of Roswell.

Seven Rivers was then the town of the lower Pecos Valley, a village noted for Texas cowmen cinched up with belts of cartridges and fired with a love of horses and a hankering for war. Phelps White and Bud Wilkerson were peaceable enough, but they were working to their wagon a chunky-built brown horse that Tobe Platner, another Littlefield hand, had taken away from an Indian. Phelps had fallen heir to him, and at that day and time nobody expected to see a fast horse come out of a set of harness. As Bud and Phelps rested at Seven Rivers, they talked about the merits of horseflesh. When the cowmen there doubted their judgment, they unhitched their team and saddled up "Tobe," the brown horse with the black stripe down his back and the black circles

<sup>1</sup> W. H. Ingerton to J. E. H., May 31, 1939; Edgar Harral to Hervey Chesley and J. E. H., June 13, 1939.

around his knees, and when they headed south toward the village of Pecos they had money to spend, even if there was no place to spend it.<sup>2</sup>

In December, both White and McCarty were reported in Gonzales. At this time Littlefield was still planning to start a ranch with White, but as for backing Shelton Dowell in the West, he had decided one new ranch would be enough that year, and that it would be a fine thing for Dowell and McCarty to drive "500 Head of saddle Horses . . . North next Spring." Then, in his paternal way, he decided that the Foster ranch, the first land that he acquired outside the plantation holdings, located about twelve miles up the San Marcos River from Gonzales, was a good place to set his nephew Dowell up in business.<sup>3</sup> Will White, Phelps's brother, had been staying there, but Littlefield had other plans for him and thought that Dowell was probably the man to run the range. It was a brushy country, fenced with rails, where sly old longhorn cows soon learned to stand silently hidden in the thickets and force the cowboys to develop "catch dogs" to get them out.<sup>4</sup>

It has been said that after the LIT sale Littlefield "looked at his more than a quarter of a million dollars, and rejoiced that he had all the money he would ever need, that he had found his pot of gold at the end of the rainbow!" He soon overcame "this complacent satisfaction," as he expressed it, "for he says he learned long ago that the more money a man makes, the more he has to make; that a man's world opens up a little wider with each deal, and demands become heavy-

<sup>2</sup> Edgar Harral, as cited, June 13, 1939.

<sup>3</sup> George W. Littlefield to S. C. Dowell, December 20, 1881; John Dowell to S. C. Dowell, February 28, 1882, in Dowell Papers.

<sup>4</sup> Edgar F. Harral to Hervey Chesley and J. E. H., June 13, 1929.

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er."<sup>5</sup> In his own biographical notes he recalled that "he had far more money than He ever expected to have But being young only 39 years old He could not be idle—Went right ahead."<sup>6</sup>

It was wholly characteristic of him, however, that he had hardly more than turned over the LIT ranch at a handsome profit than he became all the more cautious in his business, and late in August, 1881, wrote from Chicago advising Dowell against his proposed speculation in cattle, with the observation that "Cattle are terrible High. I fear higher than they will be in Spring. Though there is no telling about how things will turn. Beef is going down very fast . . . I will look over things by time I get Home and See what will be best for you to go into." And, by way of conclusion, he expressed the financier's doubt of an investment Will White had made, and the fond uncle's observation to Dowell that "now is your best part of life and unless well improved you will always be poor—"<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, in spite of a lawsuit that was worrying him at Lampasas, he was determined to venture further with Phelps White, who set out that fall to hunt another range.

Even before he sold the LIT, Littlefield, as we saw, had it in mind to start a ranch on the Pecos, in New Mexico, by sending McCarty up the Canadian and across the divide with a couple of thousand yearling and two-year-old heifers.<sup>8</sup> Apparently this resolution was not abandoned, but only deferred by the sale of the LIT. Now, instead of having the

<sup>5</sup> *San Antonio Express*, June 4, 1916.

<sup>6</sup> Littlefield, "Autobiographical Sketch," 9.

<sup>7</sup> Littlefield to Dowell, August 24, 1881, Dowell Papers.

<sup>8</sup> S. C. Dowell to Mrs. Lizzie Dowell, June 4, 1881, in Dowell Papers.

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comparatively nearby base in the Panhandle to operate from, the Littlefield outfit was again thrown back to the friendly family estate in Gonzales County. Yet plans went forward apace as Phelps and Tom White scouted for a suitable range in eastern New Mexico, and Littlefield scoured Louisiana and "bought thousands of little old dogies at a dollar and a half a head, and double-decked them on the cars out of Shreveport like sheep and hogs." He unloaded them at Kyle, Texas, below Austin, wintered them on the range nearby, and in the spring sold four thousand of them to Phelps and Tom White "at eight dollars a head, delivered at Bosque Grande."

Early in the spring of 1882 Phelps White left South Texas for the Pecos, where he established the LFD ranch at Bosque Grande, at the spot where Charles Goodnight had wintered in 1866, and where John Chisum had followed to establish his great ranch symbolized by the long rail brand and jingle-bob ear mark. Chisum had moved back down the valley to lay out his rambling ranch home on the blessed waters of South Spring River, and neglect had laid its disintegrating hand on the historic dobes in the great grove of cottonwoods. No one lived there, but the land, which had been filed on by A. C. Rogers, had been sold to Mrs. Ella Calfee, a sister of Captain J. C. Lea, the owner of the store at Roswell and the founder of the village in that verdant spot on the sere western slope of the malignant Pecos. The Calfee place was the usual government homestead of one hundred and sixty acres, and Phelps White gave the owner ten dollars an acre, admittedly "a good price for the land, but we wanted the location."

The old Chisum house that White thus bought was a four room dobe to which he and the other LFD hands added

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two rooms later. It was located about half a mile from the point where the tortuous Pecos writhed past towards the Rio Grande. Cottonwoods grew round about to offer welcome shade for summer and firewood for winter, and a twelve-foot-deep well supplied the outfit with camp water, lifted, in time, by a hand pump. Chisum had built a picket corral of cottonwood logs that stood eight feet high, but the Littlefield outfit built more modern corrals with cedar posts hauled from the mountains and lumber from Las Vegas. There were no enclosures or horse traps, and their mounts ran loose in the open and had to be rustled every day from somewhere out in the Territory of New Mexico. Mexicans freighted in their supplies from Las Vegas, bought from the pioneer firm of Gross-Blackwell & Company. Eventually the ranch opened a commissary at Bosque Grande and stocked it well, especially with such western necessities as tobacco and ammunition.

In front of the ranch was a heavy hitching rack, made of cottonwood posts "bigger than a man's body," and when the Waterbury watches the boys bought refused to run, which was soon enough, it was a favorite sport to hang them on a post of the hitching rack and shoot them to pieces with their sixshooters. Edgar Harral, another Littlefield nephew and veteran LFD hand, says that they actually shot these posts all to pieces—"one so completely that it finally fell down."<sup>9</sup>

In April, 1882, after his return to the Pecos country, Phelps White went up the river to Cedar Canyon and bought one thousand head of cattle from the JRS, a Texas outfit that was using the east bank of the river. Meanwhile, the trail outfits were moving northwest from the Austin country with

<sup>9</sup> Edgar Harral, as cited; C. W. Foor to J. E. H., August 7, 1937.

the cattle that he and Littlefield had bought there, and White hired Charlie Foor, a JRS cowboy, to head southeast to meet the lead herd, in charge of the seasoned Bud Wilkerson, and pilot it across the Staked Plains, where water was scarce and trails almost unknown. Foor met Wilkerson and his herd of 1,800 head on Running Water Draw, in what became the Plainview country, and guided him across by way of the Plains lakes, Portales, and Stinking Springs. Foor then doubled back to meet Charles McCarty, in July, but the season had turned dry, as it has a habit of doing, the lake water had vanished, and McCarty, with three thousand cows and calves unable to make the long, dry drives, was forced to halt on Running Water until rains came in August and "put out" water in the surface lakes.<sup>10</sup>

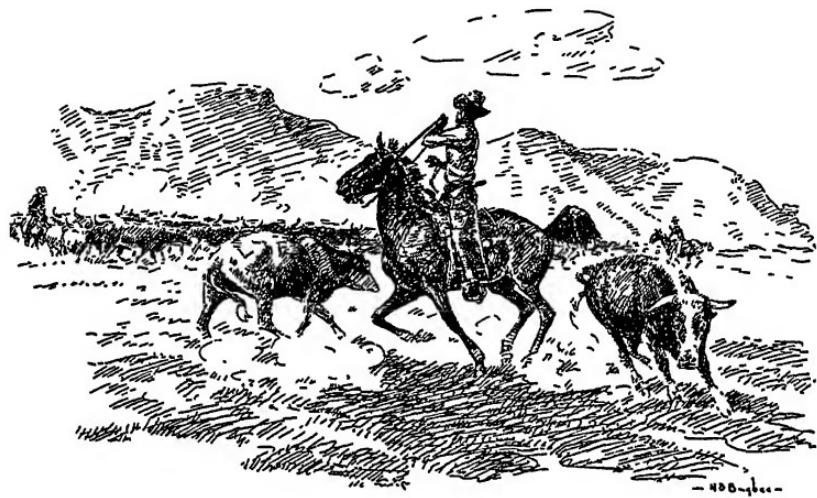
When he sold the LIT ranch, Littlefield, proud of his brand as good cowmen are, wished to retain it, and offered the purchaser one thousand dollars for it. The management refused, and not only bought his cattle but his brand, so that White now, forced to choose another, adopted the LFD and spread it on the right hip, side and shoulder. Whereas the first brand found its origin in the three initial letters of Littlefield's name, the last was taken from the first, the middle, and the last letter. As an interesting illustration of how fancy and folklore lend color to the incidents of history, one story that comes down by word of mouth—as stories should—gives this account of the origin of the brand: While the Littlefield outfits were driving on the Texas Trail, they sometimes had to drop weak and crippled "stuff" along the way, and with a cowboy sense of humor they properly branded it as condemned with these three letters: LFD, "Left

<sup>10</sup> C. W. Foor to J. E. H., August 7, 1937.

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For Dead." Some of these cattle did not die, but lived to perpetuate the story if not the brand.<sup>11</sup>

When the thousands of heifers from the Louisiana swamps streamed down the eastern slopes of the Pecos to their new range in that high, dry country, the LFD was burned into their sorry hides. But altitude and aridity work



wonders in cattle, even as they exert some strange effect on the souls of men, and "their first increase on the ranch were, as yearlings, a lot bigger than the mothers."

White bought a herd of one thousand head from Roger Sikes, who had come up the river from the Colorado City country, in Texas, wintered on the Taiban, east of Sumner, and headed back for the Seven Rivers. He bought other little bunches up and down the Pecos to place on the range, but most of the LFD stock was driven out from Texas.

Littlefield bought a total of nine thousand cows and heif-

<sup>11</sup> J. Phelps White to J. E. H., March 2, 1933; Charles W. Walker to J. E. H., March 5, 1937.

ers, drove them to the new ranch that spring, and located them up and down the salty Pecos above Chisum, on "a country 40 by 80 miles," as he remembered it, and again with but few cattle to crowd him. He had been forced to hustle to get them at a price he thought was right. They were still high in the spring and summer of 1882, and he sent Dowell and other buyers into southeast Texas, as far as Liberty and Jefferson counties, scouting for acceptable purchases. They found little to interest them besides the "seed ticks and mosquitos." After Dowell and two others had beat the brush with little success for several weeks, Littlefield wrote him in the usual vein: "I dont want to pay 12\$ for Stock Cattle over there. If you cant buy any cattle to pay you for the time then send all those drafts in a letter here. I wish you would get into Something that there was some money in. If I can get up a trade I am working for now —I will move Will White from the pasture [the Foster Ranch] next fall and will then put you there I think it will work well . . ."<sup>12</sup>

Littlefield sent 2,200 head of steers from the LFD up the trail to Dodge City, but did not get them sold. After they had been held on the Cimarron from June until September, Phelps White made his way northeast and brought them back to join the little heifers on the Pecos; he paid the Major, on behalf of the Littlefield-White partnership, eight dollars a head. He got them back to the LFD September 21, 1882, wintered them there, and next spring gathered—remarkably enough—all but about a dozen head—trailed them to Deer Trail, Colorado, and sold them for "twenty dollars around."

<sup>12</sup> Letters of S. C. Dowell to Mrs. Lizzie H. Dowell, May 29, June 7 and 10, 1882, and Littlefield to Dowell, June 19, 1882, in Dowell Papers.

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Thus Phelps White graduated to the standing of a cowman and launched the last and most extensive of the Littlefield ranching ventures upon its long and successful career.

Phelps White was incurably optimistic about the prospects and the country, and at the end of September of the first year wrote back to Shelton Dowell to tell him what conditions were like:

We are having fine weather and the Grass is curing up for winter feed our cattle are fattening very fast and if the weather will only continue good they will go in [to] the winter in fine fix Will [White] wrote me that he was at the Ellison Ranch & that you was going on the Foster Ranch in the forks of the River How do you like it? How many cattle will you try & keep in the Pastur? I thought it may be that you would only try to Farm as you . . . must think cotton is the King Remember what cotton did for you some years ago And let it alone There is more money in that Grass in one year than you could ever dig out of the farm. My Horses are all in good fix or will be in a short time. Shelt, there . . . is no use talking about the difference in this country & that. there is a big difference & you all must admit to it I can show you yearling[s] here that are as large as your four year old steers The only thing about this country is the scarcity of water If I can ever get Uncle George out here I will try and get him to lets try and make tanks off from the River if we can only get water where I want it then there is Room here for all of the cattle in Tex I would go ahead with the work at once but you Know he has never seen the count[r]y and Dont Know what he might say

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Mc is off trying to get rid of his Horses Dont Know when he will get back if he can trade his Horse[s] for a bunch of cattle then he will stay on the Ranch if not I think he may come back to Tex this winter & drive up the trail in the spring I have bought fifty very nice young Bulls from John Chisom for thirty Dol (\$30.00) per head they are as good as any the Dock had in his Pasture last winter I will get more in the spring. I wish you could see old man Chishorns Ranch & cattle the best in the Territory His house cost him twelve thousand Dol All well fitted out, but the old man will have to leave it soon as he is getting old.<sup>18</sup>

Again, in the early winter, White wrote from the range, with buoyant optimism:

I have been out all day looking at our cattle find them looking very well—did not see any that I think will die this winter If we loose any to amount to mutch it will be old cows that calved after they got here from the trail or some of those little Ark. yearling[s] we got from Ellison. They dont look as well as they should I dont know how ma[n]y beeves we will get from here in the spring—but Uncle George says that we have 1500 head that are three years & up. He wrote me that the Grass in your Pasture was short on act of being over stocked through the summer Shelt that is what always plays the wild with Pastures—one will get too many cattle in before he can think about it well if you was here to see how mutch country our cattle has to run on you would smile they are all along the River for 35 mils and run back 15 on boath sides— that takes in lots of

<sup>18</sup> J. P. White to S. C. Dowell, September 29, 1882, Dowell Papers.

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country you see. I did not brand as many calves this fall as I thought we would . . . Our Horse[s] are in fine fix Tell Uncle George that if [he] buys a bunch of cattle in North Tex that I can send him a good bunch of Horses to drive them on think I can spare thirty or thirty five in spring then have plenty to geather our cattle on Shelt the only thing here that will bother us is the sheep & I think the way we have the lands filed on will stop them to some extent. You Know this is all U S land here and every body think they have a perfec right to use it

Then there is more real mean men in the sheep business than any one thing on earth. Mc & I will start to the Guadlope Mountains in the morning to look at a place to put the fine cows on from Mo. I wish you was here to go long there is lots of Bear & Deer out there—if I Kill any will write you when I get back will be gone about ten days Well I will close as I have to go and put a pair of shoes on one of my horses I have done most of our blacksmithing this year

P. S. Did Will leave a pair of Pistol handles & a belt Buckle (silver) at the Ranch when he left? If he did pleas take care of them for me as they was given me by Dud Pan[nell]<sup>14</sup>

Thus the very active months of 1882—active for the Littlefield interests and the far-flung cow country in general —drew to a typical cowboy end on the LFD with a bear hunt in the mountains and a proper regard for a dead cowboy's gift, a pair of sixshooter grips and a silver belt buckle left by the high spirited Pannell, who slept on the Canadian in Texas. The symbolism of these, however, was not that of vanity and death, but might have been that of sterling char-

<sup>14</sup> J. P. White to S. C. Dowell, December 2, 1882, Dowell Papers.

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acter and a new grip on life. Anyway, with the coming of the next year this Littlefield venture was to take form for the long range future.

The intention of the LFD owners at first was to incorporate the venture under the territorial laws of New Mexico, but finding that this necessitated a great deal of red tape, and nursing the characteristic western aversion for red tape, they decided to operate as a partnership. Littlefield himself, in the all too brief and incomplete autobiographical account that he left, has told the story of the ranch set-up succinctly and well.

In the spring of 1883, as Littlefield related, he made his way to the LFD—a long trip even then, whether by way of the railroad to Pecos, Texas, and up the river by buckboard, or by way of Kansas, west on the Santa Fe Railway to Las Vegas, and thence down the river to the ranch. At the dobe house at Bosque Grande, he called together his bosses, his nephews Phelps and Tom White, and Charlie McCarty, and organized the Littlefield Cattle Company, and as usual he counted his faithful hands in for a generous share.

"How much money have you, Mac?" he asked.

Cowpuncher-like, McCarty said he had none; only a few cattle. Littlefield suggested that he put them into the company brand and he would credit him with a ten-thousand-dollar interest in the enterprise, and pay him the money and 10 per cent interest if he wanted to get out in one year's time.

"Tom, how much have you got?" The rotund and genial Tom had only \$250.

"Well," said the Major, "you can come in for \$18,000 stock"—another share without relation to capital.



*On the trail*

"And Phelps," the Major continued, "you have the \$10,000 I gave you when I sold the Potter County Ranch in 1881. I will put you in for \$60,000. Now that will be the interest you each will have, and I hold the balance." He did not say what the balance was.

Thus he effected the financial organization of a great ranch in Chisum's old cow camp, and left Phelps White in charge.<sup>15</sup>

As White and Littlefield intimated, their range was ample. It was "high, wide and handsome." In keeping with the generous custom of the times, as well as with their own immodest ambitions, they claimed more land and water than they needed. It was just as well, for their needs were constantly growing—the industry they pursued was tremendously expansive in nature, and in that broad, new land other venturesome souls were quick to tread on their heels and appropriate the unused range to their own ends. Only the fact that their cattle grazed over the unfenced Pecos world with nothing but the uncertain pacings of the line riders to

<sup>15</sup> George W. Littlefield, "Autobiographical Sketch," 9, 12-13.

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hold them to their designated ranges comes down to support Littlefield's recollection that they "occupied a country 40 by 80 miles." Actually, in the memory of those who ran the ranch and punched the cattle, it was considerably less than this, but for their initial needs it was big enough.

Once established, the southern edge of their range reached down to Lloyd's Crossing, near where the railroad crosses the river about fifteen miles above Roswell. From there it ran north eighteen miles to the headquarters at Bosque Grande, taking in both sides of the river, and continued on six miles above to Six Mile Draw on the eastern side of the Pecos. Except for scattered holes filled by uncertain rains, there was little water away from the river on the east side, but some creeks from the west extended their range into the grama covered ridges there, and enriched the range that was cut up by the salt flats lying between. Salt Creek, which entered the Pecos from the west about two miles above Lloyd's Crossing, was their south line on that side. Twelve or fifteen miles west of the river and north of Salt Creek, at Yellow Lake—a hole of gyp water—the LFDs joined Chisum in establishing a horse camp. They built a rock house in the corner of a rock corral that Chisum had already constructed there. A few years later, in 1885, they extended their range northwestward by putting a camp at some springs just below the forks of Huggins Creek. This creek was named for a jingle-bob cowpuncher the Indians had killed several years before. The camp was about twelve miles from the river and eighteen miles above Bosque Grande. The LFDs claimed the range all the way to the Huggins Creek on that side, where they became neighbors to the Straight Y outfit, owned by Reynolds, a Las Vegas banker.

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Headquarters of this ranch was at the mouth of Wiley Creek farther up the river. On the east side Mose Lutz, "a big fat fellow but a little cowman," was their northerly neighbor.

To the south of the LFD, below Salt Creek and Lloyd's Crossing, was the great alkaline area ruled by the failing, quixotic John Chisum, who sat in the dog-run of his great rambling house on South Spring River, with the clear waters gurgling through the wide ditch beneath it, ostensibly to cool the waning days of a man who had seen fiery times. And there he sat—in the retreating shade on the west side of a morning, in the lengthening shadows on the east side of a hot afternoon, his lanky frame draped comfortably over a chair, awaiting death to set him free of an incurable disease. Perhaps he mused in memory over the stirring days when his long rail brand symbolized his personal control of the whole Pecos range, and perhaps also, but hardly contritely, of the days when, according to legend, he stocked his range with other men's cattle driven from Texas.

For John Chisum, the peculiar patriarch of the Pecos, was cut to no ordinary pattern. In an unusual and distinctive land, he stood out as an unusual man, not alone in the length of his long rail brand, the oddity of his jingle-bob ear mark, and the breadth of his extensive range, but also in his personality and character, which seem to baffle analysis. A brave man, involved in the Lincoln County War, the bloodiest southwestern saga ever sung by 30-30 bullets and .45 slugs, he was a leader who never carried a gun; a wealthy man with a home of primitive elegance, he was wont to pull a blanket off a comfortable bed and sleep on the hard floor. His ready wit lifted him from many a bad situation where a gun would hardly have helped him, and his flexible conscience bore no

lasting scars from his earlier and, if tradition is true, careless mixture of other men's brands. His outfit was the principal neighbor of the LFDs, and "Uncle John," as he was called, became their steadfast friend.<sup>16</sup> For whatever else may be said about him, he was a great cowman of the open range type, and as such won the admiration of these sturdy men from Texas.

The LFD boys built a dugout at Lloyd's Crossing, on the east side of the river, and boarded it up inside to hold back the crumbling dirt walls. The theory was good, but the remedy was worse than the disease; because the curb offered a refuge for pack rats and they proved no less a nuisance than the dirt. Below this dugout Chisum's longhorn cows, crossed now with Durham bulls, grazed all the way to Seven Rivers, and beyond—almost to the Texas line.

The settlements along the Pecos were few. Far toward the north the musical and romantic names of Anton Chico, Santa Rosa, and Puerta de Luna rolled off lazy tongues to indicate squat collections of adobes that constituted three little villages. South of these Bosque Redondo, the Round Timbers, cast their cottonwood shade over the settlement at Fort Sumner. Next was the Littlefield ranch, and, on South Spring River far below, the town of Roswell was getting under way. Though others had been there before him, the founding of Roswell may be said to date from the coming of Captain Joseph C. Lea, a quiet and capable Missourian who had fought under the roving banner of Quantrell during the Civil War. He first ran his cattle in the mountains to the west in 1877, but settled his family at Roswell and soon

<sup>16</sup> There is a great deal of literature on the subject of Chisum, good, bad and indifferent. He has become a legendary figure.

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shifted his cattle to the valley, where he built up extensive holdings under the LEA brand.<sup>17</sup>

In 1878 old Ash Upson, who passed as a school-teacher, newspaperman, and lawyer, but who was reputedly more familiar with the potency of whiskey than the power of Blackstone, had been keeping a store at the site of Roswell; but by the time the LFD organization was effected, the settlement had grown into a village, under the dominant influence of Lea. There were two stores, Rufe Donahoo's blacksmith shop, a post office kept by William H. Cosgrove, and a surveyor's office run by A. H. Whetstone, and Judge Frank Lea, a brother of the merchant and cowman, had located there as an attorney at law.

Farther toward the south, in the great expanse of country watered by the writhing Pecos, there was only the headquarters of other Texas cowmen at Seven Rivers. Between Roswell and the town of Pecos, on the Texas and Pacific Railroad far below in Texas, there was no other settlement. In working that country, the cowmen followed the same methods that had been developed in their native Texas. They all worked together. The "general works"—the LFD, LEA, Chisum, the Diamond A below Chisum, and the rest—threw their wagons together on the lower Pecos and worked the country north clear through the LFDs. At the same time stray-men went south toward Pecos, into the Hashknife and W country in Texas; west into the mountains along the Hondo, Peñasco, and Feliz; and north and east across the plains and even beyond the Canadian.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> George W. Coe to Hervey Chesley and J. E. H., June 12, 1939; Lucius Dills, *Roswell*, pamphlet; Edgar Harral to Hervey Chesley and J. E. H., June 13, 1939.

<sup>18</sup> Walter Walker, from Gonzales, outside man for the LFD for years,



- HOB-g-bee - 25

*"... but sometimes there was trouble . . ."*

Usually the different outfits worked the country peacefully enough, but sometimes there was trouble over a disputed brand. At times there were honest mistakes in branding, as when, dragging calves from the sides of their mothers in a general roundup, the roper mismated one and called the wrong brand as he dragged the calf to the fire. Mistakes thus made, while embarrassing to the outfit that made them, were easily recognized and corrected, and John Chisum had his own tactful way of calling the attention of the LFD boys to their mistakes.

At a roundup one day on the Pecos, Uncle John observed a freshly branded "LFD" calf sucking one of his U cows. When Phelps White rode up he called his attention to the calf, saying:

"Mr. White, I wish you could have been around here 'while ago and heard that little calf talking to its Mama.

scouted the country thoroughly, even as far southeast as Midland, and, after months of roving from one general roundup to another, regularly made his way back to the LFD with his mount of horses, his bed, and his bunch of strays. Walter Walker to J. E. H., August 5, 1937.

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"‘Mama! Mama!’ he said, ‘those old LFD boys just chased me round and round, roped me and dragged me, and put that big old LFD on my side, Mama, when I wanted a nice little U on my shoulder, like you.’

“Now,” Chisum said, “if you put another LFD on him, it would just spoil the poor little thing’s hide. Just let him go Mr. White, but I wish you’d be a little careful hereafter.” After this gentle rebuke, we may assume that Phelps White felt very sheepish indeed.<sup>19</sup>

Meanwhile, the range filled up. All went well until the drought of the middle eighties laid its blight over a land long on cattle and lush with optimism and hope. As the dry weather dragged on, depressing men and drawing cattle, the supply of grass within reach of water gradually dwindled away, and daily the trails grew to distressing length as the cattle cut toward the uplands, where still might be found the growth of other and better seasons. As the months passed, the drought-stricken stock went to the river only when almost famished, walking off more flesh and strength on the journey than they could possibly regain. Ten and fifteen miles back from the river they ranged, until finally, when they rushed into the river, they drank so much of the gypy water that, in their weakened condition, many lay down and died. Thousands of others, with bellies weighted with water, sank their weak legs into the grasping quicksands of the Pecos, bogged, and died without moving from the edge of the stream.

The year 1886 was a carnival of death and destruction on the Pecos—that bitter stream that Charles Goodnight referred to as the “grave-yard of the cowman’s hopes.” Up

<sup>19</sup> C. D. Bonney to J. E. H., March 6, 1937.

#### LFD ON THE PECOS

and down its glistening, gypy course, every cowboy was riding bog, "tromping" the hardened sand into a quicky condition about each mired cow and then pulling her out by the horn of his saddle. Then he would tail the weakened animal up and start it on its tottering way. It was man killing work.

The alkaline water that was accessible tortured men as well as cattle. George Read, an old Block hand on the west side of the Pecos, tells of how several hands from his outfit drank from a hole of stagnant water that caused every man to lose all the hair from his head. Diarrhea was a common complaint. Some outfits carried canned tomatoes and drank the juice as relief from the Pecos water. The LFD wagon carried Jamaica ginger by the case, and the cowpunchers drank generous quantities to offset the effects of the water, while others mixed soda and vinegar for an effervescent drink.

Frank Lloyd, a salty old Irishman who guided for Colonel R. S. Mackenzie and hunted buffalo with the Causeys, was working for Chisum as a cowpuncher at the time. He was in a horse camp on Long Arroyo, but left one day and rode



*Out of the bog*

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up to the outfit at Cave Lake, on the east side of the river, below Roswell. As the lakes got low and boggy during the drought, cattle had died in them by bunches, but a rain had fallen and run fresh water in on the decaying carcasses, and there, on water, the wagon was camped. Being dry himself, Lloyd got off at the wagon and walked over to the water keg to get a drink, but Dick, the Negro cook, stopped him, saying:

"Frank, I wouldn't drink that water. It don't taste very good. Let me make you some coffee out of it." He showed Lloyd where he had strained it through a tow sack, and, Lloyd added, "I'll bet he had got a gallon of maggots out of it. It didn't even make good coffee." And yet it was all they had.

For that matter, the Pecos, too, was filled with screw worms, working out by the millions from the thousands of carcasses that lay rotting in the edge of the river, and the straining of the drinking water through a gunny sack was a sanitary precaution practiced clear down below the Texas line. Lloyd claims that they could have fenced the river with a wall of carcasses four-feet-high on either side, that half the cattle in the country died, and that "that was where I fell out with those fine cattle. Phelps White had these Texas cattle and he never lost one-third as many as Chisum did. Chisum had his bred up to Durhams, and they just died like sheep."<sup>20</sup>

Lucius Dills, another old-timer of the alkali flats, stood on the Pecos in 1887, after the rains came, and watched the flood sweep by, and for two long hours he could have taken

<sup>20</sup> Frank Lloyd to J. E. H., March 7, 1937, and to Hervey Chesley and J. E. H., June 12, 1939.

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a ten-foot pole, he swore, and crossed the river by jumping from carcass to carcass. Without doubt the loss was frightful, and the Pecos had justified the curse placed on it by the seasoned Goodnight. It was still the "grave-yard of the cowman's hopes." One exception seemed to belie the generality of Goodnight's terse description, and that was the continued growth of the Littlefield Cattle Company, "the only one I know since I've been here," said C. D. Bonney, merchant of Roswell since 1881, "that didn't go broke."

For this there were several reasons. The company was owned by a man with financial reserves—a most important factor in any business. Furthermore, Littlefield not only knew business, but he knew cow business, and, according to Bonney, he plied Phelps White with letters, "weekly and monthly letters, big thick ones, telling Phelps over and over what he knew about the cow business and what Phelps should do . . . and he made Phelps White one of the best cowmen in the Southwest." Thus the LFD had reserves, and management. And its management had the foresight to get off the Pecos. The abandonment of this range was well under way when the drought of 1886 came.



## CHAPTER TEN

### THE FOUR LAKES RANCH

THE removal of the LFD ranch from the Pecos to the plains was the most significant and important decision in the history of its long and successful management. Besides the fact that the Pecos valley had many natural handicaps, there were other reasons indicating the wisdom of the move; of these the availability of a high, fresh, unused range was the most important. The Pecos, by the middle eighties, was a good place to get away from; the grama covered plains were a good place to go to. The LFD cowpunchers discovered the nature of the Four Lakes country, and they loaded their plunder, gathered their cattle, and "pulled out." However, the move was hardly as short and easy as that.

In the days of border warfare, the Indians seemed to fade miraculously away upon the high plains of Texas into an unknown and naturally hostile land that baffled their white pursuers. The impression that the only response of this high, dry land to thirst was to be found in the mockery of its mirages lasted for many years—until, in the middle seventies, Colonel R. S. Mackenzie, of army fame, crossed and re-crossed the Llano Estacado by way of its surface lakes. After him, in 1877, Captain Nicolas Nolan and an army detail

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pushed out into the sand country west of Lubbock, and, by bad maneuvers and worse plainscraft, suffered the dread agonies of thirst that had kept men off the plains for years. Still later Captain G. W. Arrington, with a party of Texas Rangers, made a hard but ineffectual scout into the same territory, crossing over the line into New Mexico, and reaching waters that he called Ranger and Four Lakes.<sup>1</sup>

Contemporaneous with these explorers were the buffalo hunters, who prowled over the whole plains region and pushed the buffalo westward from their natural habitat along the foot of the plains out upon the high plains proper, to the heads of the creeks that feed the Concho and Colorado, the Brazos and the Red. Then remnants of the great herds, cut off in their migrations and driven from old grazing grounds, drifted farther west and stopped around the scattered lakes, from Baird Lake in the Midland country to Cedar, Tahoka, Silver, and Spring lakes farther north. At last, some of them got over to Four Lakes, still on the high plains but across the New Mexico line. There the hunters found them.

Among the hunters who followed the trade almost from its inception in western Kansas to the very last hide in Texas, was that loose partnership made up of the Causey brothers—John and George—and their colorful associates, Bill Benson, Frank Lloyd, and little George Jefferson.

They worked their way south from the original tents that marked the founding of Dodge City, killing buffaloes by the thousands. As the herds grew scarce, they pushed

<sup>1</sup> These expeditions are treated in detail in various issues of *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Austin; see particularly Vol. XLIII, 356–64; the *Panhandle-Plains Historical Review*, Canyon, Vol. I, 54–66 and the *West Texas Historical Yearbook*, 1939.

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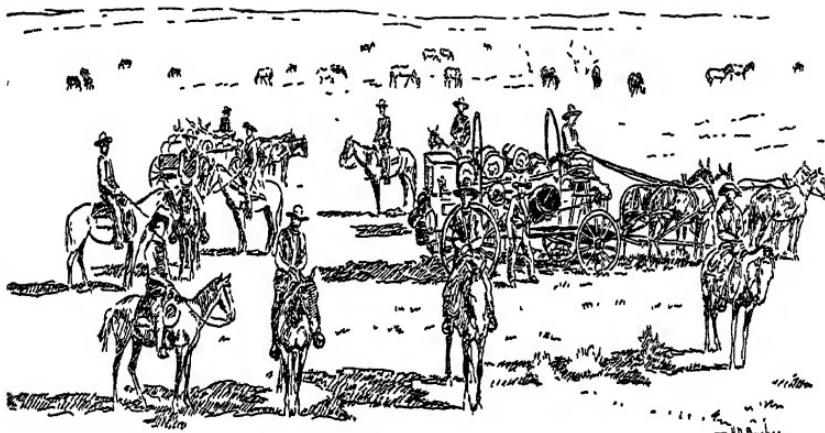
west from Fort Griffin to the cap rock, up the Yellow House Cañon, on to Yellow House Lake, up the Sod House Draw, and then, in the winter of 1878, across the plains into New Mexico to the salty Four Lakes that never went dry. Coming up on the western edge of the farthest lake was a spring of water that was fresh and sweet. It was a good place to camp, as the Indians had found out before, and nearby was a miserable remnant of buffalo—about four hundred head. The Causeys killed them and prepared to haul the hides to Fort Griffin.

In order to recross the plains to the east—a long trip without water—they drove out halfway with a supply in their barrels, dug holes in the ground, lined each with a big bull hide in which they had plugged up the bullet holes, filled these hide vats with water, and returned to camp for their skins and equipment. Thus breaking their trip on the way out, they watered their teams at the hide holes, and next day made their way to the water in the Yellow Houses.<sup>2</sup>

It was four years later that Phelps White and the Littlefield outfit located at Bosque Grande. After they were well established and the ranch was running smoothly, they heard

<sup>2</sup> Frank Lloyd to J. E. H., March 7, 1937.

Yellow Houses—a bluff of yellowish limestone in the northwest corner of what is now Hockley County, on the old trail running west from the headwaters of the Brazos across the plains to old Fort Sumner on the Pecos. There were caves in the face of the bluff, and the whole, seen through a mirage, greatly resembled a city. Waterholes at the foot of the bluff made the location a favorable camping place even in Spanish times when it was known as Casas Amarillas. This noted landmark of the Llano Estacado had a strong influence on the place names of the region: the Yellow or Yellow House Lake a few miles north of the bluff, Yellow House Creek rising west of the bluff and flowing near it east through Yellow House Canyon (east and south of Lubbock), the railroad station of Yellow House to the north and near Littlefield in Lamb County, and the Yellow House ranch occupying land in this area.



*Yellow House ranch outfit*

of some buffalo at Four Lakes, where the Causeys had been, sixty-five miles east of Roswell, and in the fall of 1882 determined upon a hunt. White, McCarty, Wilkerson, and some others of the LFD hands, along with two of Chisum's, took a camp outfit and set out. They turned down the river toward the Juan Chávez Crossing, east of Roswell. This crossing had been named after an old Mexican who, by report, had lived and died there at one hundred and thirty-five years of age, and only then because "cigarettes killed him," or so the cowboys claimed. From this vicinity they left the river and pointed their wagon tongue eastward, toward Comanche and Mescalero springs, and up the cap rock toward Four Lakes.

They not only found the fresh-water spring in the lower lake, but the finest cattle range in southeastern New Mexico. They went back to the Pecos and in time forgot about buffalo, but they remembered the buffalo grass, and McCarty got hold of Harry Robertson and the two squatted on Mescalero Spring and on the Four Lakes, twenty miles beyond. In the fall of 1883, Littlefield had White cut out all the old

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saddle horses, and McCarty took them up the river toward Las Vegas, trading them off for cows. He brought back four hundred head, drove them to Four Lakes, and located them there under the care of Harry Robertson. These were the first cattle on the Four Lakes ranch.<sup>3</sup>

In 1884 Ed White came in on Ranger Lake, fifteen miles to the east, to winter 1,200 head of cattle on range that McCarty claimed for himself, though he did not need it. George Causey had built a rock house and corrals there two years before, for Causey was a rare drifter who built houses as if he intended to stay. He shortly moved on to the head of Sulphur Draw, near present Bronco. There he dug a well and started another ranch, which became the OHO. Meanwhile, the long-headed management of the Littlefield Cattle Company could see the way the dry wind was blowing on the Pecos, and in the spring of 1885 Littlefield bought out Ed White and the O JIM ranch at the site of Lovington, and consolidated the company interests with his own and McCarty's. McCarty became dissatisfied, and the Major bought him out. Then, still with Littlefield's backing, he struck out to Hernandez Spring, near present Kenna, and started the T 71 ranch, and the Major sent old Nath, his body servant of Civil War days, to locate on other water near by, thus assuring himself friendly neighbors on the northwest—an important thing for any ranch where people are scattered and neighbors are significant.<sup>4</sup>

As "the drought of '86" became worse, they hastened the digging of wells—for the Four Lakes ranch was to de-

<sup>3</sup> Edgar F. Harral to J. E. H., January 2, 1940; Lucius Dills to J. E. H., March 5, 1937; D. J. Miller to J. E. H., June 23, 1937.

<sup>4</sup> Edgar F. Harral, as cited; Charles W. Walker to J. E. H., March 5, 1937.

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pend primarily on windmills—and also hastened the movement of their cattle. They pulled the chuck wagon in on the west side of the Lakes, near the sweet water spring, and stuck a green cottonwood pole in the ground to hold the cook's canvas fly in place. When they moved the wagon they left the pole standing, and it sprouted in the subirrigated soil and grew into a great tree which may still be seen at the Four Lakes headquarters. They dug a well about ten feet deep, put in water elevators operated by mule power, and as drought and death laid their blight on the Pecos, they pushed their cattle across from the west side of the river and, amid a great din of bawling calves and starving mother-cows, loose-herded them up the slope eastward toward Four Lakes.

All over that gently undulating country, waving miles on waving miles, were the thick, flag-like tops of the black grama grass beckoning a rich welcome to the men with the energy and the ingenuity to come and claim it. Away to their north, below the rolling sandhills covered with rusty-red sage grass, was the Portales Spring, over whose cool waters Jim Newman and Doak Goode were waging warlike dispute. To their east was the uncertain meridian that divided the Territory of New Mexico from the sovereign state of Texas, and to their south was grass and space. As genial and rugged old Bob Beverley was wont to say, it was a great country, which "belonged to God and man, instead of the Federal Land Bank and the tax collector," and it was theirs to use, subject only to the limitations imposed by a stern and not improvident nature. But these limitations were not inconsiderable, and the provision of stock water, the fencing of the ranch, and the trailing of cattle to a far-away market

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were a part of the hard routine of life that these men paid for the bounty of free grass.

With fresh range, no bogs, and hardy Texas cattle, the LFD managed to escape the extremes of loss and destruction that nature visited upon the luckless ranches on the Pecos. The outfit moved between fifteen and twenty thousand cattle to the plains, and set up headquarters at Four Lakes. As water is the first consideration on any man's range, Phelps White began watering the country with windmills. At first the Littlefield outfit set mills on towers that stood twenty-two feet from the ground to the platform. They looked high enough to any cowpuncher that had to grease them. Later they built forty-foot towers and crowned them with giant railroad Eclipse mills that churned the water in generous streams into surface tanks, built with scraper and team. They spaced the wells ten miles apart, so that cattle would not have to walk much more than five miles to water in any direction, and knew they were being good to these long-horns from Texas that had been walking off flesh in ten-mile trips from grass to drink.

They bought their first mills at Midland, on the Texas and Pacific Railroad, which they reached by a long cow trail that pointed southeast. Later they bought in Amarillo, on the Fort Worth and Denver Railway, then building across the Panhandle. Their own freighters, with long mule teams strung in double tandem and responsive to a single jerk-line, laid the mills in at the ranch. The windmills were the industrial East's contribution to the West—cheap and sensible power which transformed the waterless plains into a pattern of established ranches.

Littlefield's trail outfits, delivering cattle at the same

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points, sometimes loaded their wagons on the return trip with windmills, pipe, and sucker rods, and cowboys who scorned the plow handles in the settlements learned to crawl up a tower, pull the rods, cuss a monkey wrench, and carry an oil can. This transformation of unused grass into windmill ranches was going on throughout the plains country, and the LFD boys were luckier than some in having their wells shallow and the rods easy to pull.

In time, each large outfit had its own windmiller, whose sole duty was to circulate from well to well and keep the mills in repair. George Causey, the buffalo hunter, had gone to mustanging in the country south of Four Lakes; and his partner, George Jefferson, hired out to the LFDs and was given the job of riding circuit on the mills and keeping them greased. Perhaps, as a former Indian captive, a buffalo hunter, and an old frontiersman, he had seen so much danger that, like another noted, if fictional, character in history, windmills held no terror for him. Anyway, he took the job that most cowpunchers, who dreaded any elevation higher than the seat of a saddle on a horse's back, never wanted to fill; and apparently he never experienced the dizzy feeling that resulted in the naming of a neighboring outfit established by the Mallets. There, from a windmill tower, an early cowboy, surveying the widespread "baldies" below him where no contrasting elevation taller than a bull chip rose to temper the illusion of great height, exclaimed that it was "the highest and lonesomest place in the world," and to this day the spot is called "The High Lonesome ranch."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Bob Beverley's version of the naming of the ranch differs from the story current in the native land of the writer. He says it was named after the old High Lonesome ranch the owners, the Heards, previously had on Centralia Draw, in Texas.

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But little George Jefferson, with the big, stout heart and the tremendous voice, had heard the wolf howl for many years, and for him there could have been no more lonesome sound than the long-drawn squeak of a slow-running windmill that, in the middle of the night, was crying for oil. This western Don Quixote, on a slow-jogging Rosinante fat on grama grass, charged all the mills in turn, his sturdy weapon a bottle of oil tied to the fork of his saddle. "Old Jeff" was a character, as windmillers have a right to be.<sup>6</sup>

And thus, with windmills, wells, and water on the high plains, along with a technique for handling them, the LFDs became "a windmill ranch." They threw their cattle on the dry but still nutritious grasses of the Four Lakes country, occupying the public domain for their personal convenience, and paying little tribute in lease fees to a far-away government that contributed little to them. And yet they did not forsake the river entirely, for two ranges—even if one is bad—are better than one, when men gamble their fortune and their future on the vagaries of the western seasons. Hence the LFDs maintained a foothold and kept a great many cattle on the Pecos until 1894.

While barbed wire had already been strung across the state of Texas to the tune of sixshooter shots and other discordant notes, it was not being used in New Mexico to any appreciable extent. Yet the shortage of grass and the length of wire in Texas were sending other cowmen west. The Mallets came in to start the High Lonesome ranch, southeast of the Four Lakes, and later to sell to Allen Heard and "T Bar" White; some of the Esteses came across from the Yel-

<sup>6</sup> Charles Walker to J. E. H., August 5, 1937; Dick J. Miller to J. E. H., June 23, 1937.

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low House Cañon, because the XIT was fencing it up; Gene and "General" Mackenzie were hitting the Monument Spring country with a grim determination to have what was theirs; and the Cowden brothers were building up a great herd under the JAL brand along the JAL Draw. Two days of riding in any direction, and an LFD cowpuncher would be bumping into crowding neighbors. Hence Littlefield began thinking of the virtues of wire.<sup>7</sup>

Already the XITs had fenced the Texas-New Mexico line, thus giving the LFDs protection from drifting cattle on the east, while the sixty-five intervening miles without water between the Four Lakes and the Pecos assured them of protection from crowding on the west. On the northwest the Major's brother, Bill Littlefield, moved out from the Pecos to ranch at Barnum Spring, about ten miles west of the site of Elida, New Mexico. Bud Wilkerson, at San Juan Mesa, and old Nath and Mac near the site of Kenna, assured friendly handling for LFD cattle on that side.

East of these, toward the state line, Jim Newman had come in from Texas with a herd of cattle and a love of horses when the XITs pushed him off their range on the Yellow Houses, and he started the DZ ranch at Salt Lake. North of him, on the Canadian and Palo Duro, in Texas, were old-time neighbors of the Littlefield outfit, whose cattle sometimes drifted into the sand. On the LFD north side, therefore, Littlefield decided to stretch a drift fence. His men ran one between his range and the DZs, through what is called the Milne Sand.<sup>8</sup> This was designed to keep out stray cattle from above them.

<sup>7</sup> Bob Beverley to J. E. H., June 22, 1937.

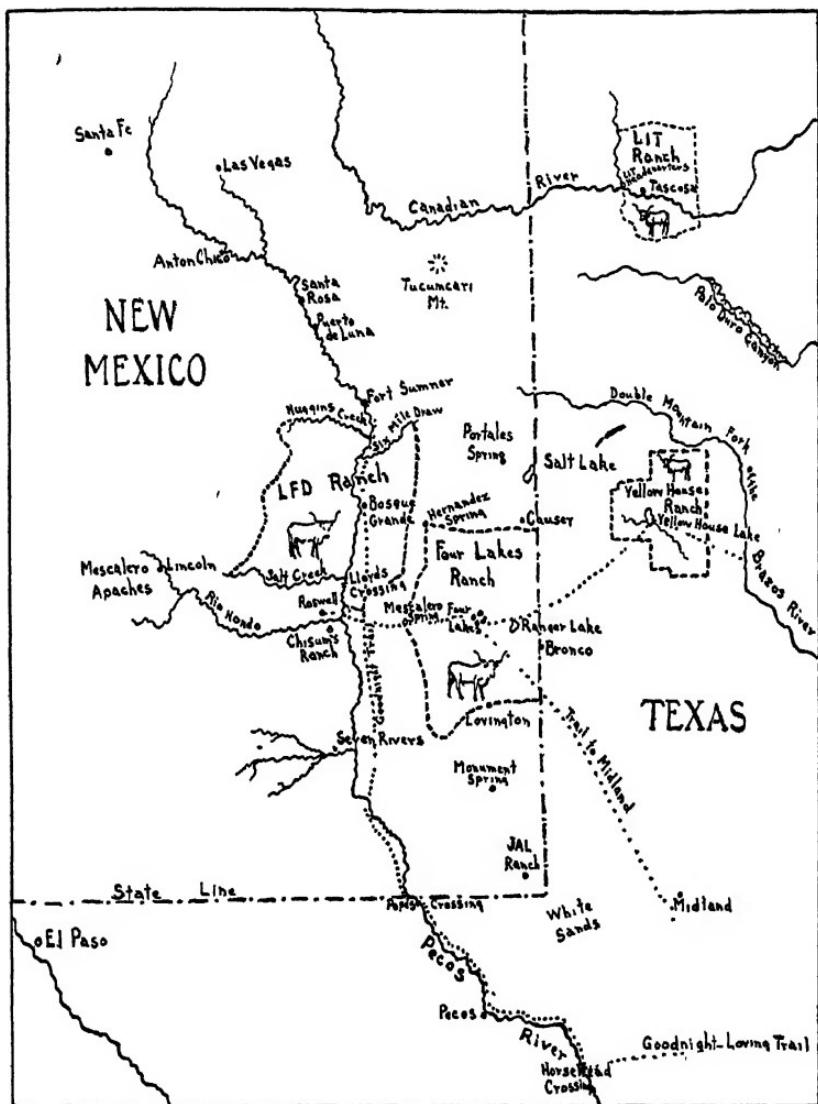
<sup>8</sup> Dick Miller to J. E. H., June 23, 1937.

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Then, to hold their own stuff from drifting south, Phelps White built another fence. In 1890, he took Charlie Walker with him in a buckboard loaded with a camping outfit and pulled by a team of Spanish mules, and drove southeast to the Texas line. From there, with a little old compass held in their laps to keep them straight, they pointed the wagon tongue due west. They tied a white string to the buckboard wheel, counted the revolutions, computed the distance, and laid out the course for their south drift fence. They passed one mile north of the site of Lovington, and stopped forty-nine and three-fourths miles west of where they started.

That same fall, after the beef herd was good and fat, Walker drove three thousand head to Midland and shipped them to St. Louis. Then in accordance with his orders from White, he contracted for posts, staples, and wire, and hired a man named Coombs to freight the supplies to the ranch and build the fence. By hauling water in tanks for his teams, Coombs and his men were able to complete the fence in 1891. After the first bad norther, Walker recalls he rode out to see if their drifting cattle had broken through. He found, instead, that the fence was lined with thousands of drifting antelope. These, impelled by that peculiar urge that prompts them to circle in front of a moving object, were soon balled up ahead of him as far as he could see. Lum Meddlin, from down about Midland, dug pits along the fence that winter to hide in, "and would kill a four-horse team load of antelope in one day." He just gutted them, he said, hauled them to Eddy, which later became Carlsbad, and shipped them out; and "he made a little stake that year, just by killing antelope."

Gradually the entire country was fenced up, though



*The Littlefield country*

there on the public domain enclosures were illegal, by Federal law. The north drift fence was fifteen miles above Four Lakes, and the two fences were about fifty miles apart. For

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all practical purposes the LFDs were as good as enclosed, though nobody in that country talked about pastures until it became legal to have them. They referred to their "drift fences" instead. Government range inspectors were sent out to make the ranchmen remove their fences, take up the posts, and fill up the holes. As soon as they were gone the cowmen reset the posts and strung up the wire again. Some wag said the LFDs wore out a good fence just by putting it up and taking it down.

At the turn of the century another inspector, a man named Hobbs, was sent to Roswell, where Charlie Walker accosted him with a reasonable proposition:

"Mr. Hobbs, I want you to come out to the ranch with me," he said, "as I want to show you that people can't live in this country and prosper without fences."

"All right," agreed the official.

Walker loaded him into a buggy, hauled him to the ranch, and started an inspection of the fences. As luck would have it, a good stiff norther struck while they were on the south side, and Walker said:

"Get out and get your overcoat on!" They did, and then settled down in the whistling cold to wait. After awhile cattle began pouring in from the north, and Walker had the practical illustration that he desired.

"Now you can see if this fence wasn't here," he said to the Federal man, "these cattle would drift on to the Pecos and down into the sandhills, and some of them would starve to death."

"Take me to the ranch," responded the inspector, "I'm freezing."

Walker took him back to Roswell, and a short time later

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the official showed him a letter that he was writing to the Secretary of the Interior, under whose jurisdiction the public domain lay, in which he made a strong protest against the order for the removal of the fences. Whether the norther and the letter did the work or not is unknown, but after that, Walker claims, they had no more trouble over their fences.<sup>9</sup>

Just how many cattle Littlefield had during his years on the Pecos is somewhat a matter of speculation, for his tally books from this period have not come down, and true tally sheets were hard to keep on cattle ranging an unfenced world. Certainly his holdings were extensive, for after Chisum's dominion over the salty slopes of the Pecos was broken, Littlefield's was the biggest ranch in New Mexico. His men moved from fifteen to twenty thousand cattle off the Pecos to the Four Lakes range in 1886,<sup>10</sup> and, since they held their steers until they were beeves, they figured from three to four head of stuff on the ranch for every calf they branded. Sometimes they branded as many as twelve thousand calves, and by 1888 Littlefield wrote that they had "35000 cattle and 400 Horses & Mules and about 15000 acres of land." Undoubtedly he meant the partnership owned this much land in fee, for their Four Lakes range at one time encompassed approximately one and one-half million acres. And when it was stocked their herd varied from forty thousand to forty-five thousand head.<sup>11</sup>

For a while the nesters bothered them but little. Later the farmers began to drift in, and Littlefield made a habit of

<sup>9</sup> Charles W. Walker to J. E. H., March 5, 1937.

<sup>10</sup> J. Phelps White to J. E. H., March 2, 1933.

<sup>11</sup> Charles W. Walker to J. E. H., March 5, 1937; Hardy and Roberts, *Historical Review of Southeast Texas*, II, 891; Littlefield to Mrs. Lizzie H. Dowell, October 14, 1888, Dowell Papers.

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buying up the patented claims and the wells of those who squatted in his pastures and managed to starve out the nester pre-emption period. These scattered tracts, and they were widely scattered, made up most of the land the LFDs bought in New Mexico. But at last the pressure that bore upon all to banish the days of free grass forced a change, and the Littlefield Cattle Company leased some 150,000 acres from the territorial government, and not only fenced it but called it fenced. Then came a period of contraction; by 1910 their holdings had shrunk to a fragment of their once extensive domain, and their herd was reduced to fifteen thousand head of cattle.<sup>12</sup>

Meanwhile, Major Littlefield had decided that free range was gone, and was buying land in Texas. In 1915 the Littlefield Company sold the Four Lakes ranch to C. J. Ballard—the LEA cowpuncher of the Pecos, who, as a boy, was working for wages and hiring a school-teacher to stay in camp and teach him. At that time the ranch consisted of seven townships of land, but as the settlers were crowding still closer, Ballard had to buy the range in self-protection at five dollars an acre—"too much to run cattle on." It helped to break him. But Major Littlefield had again turned loose in time.<sup>13</sup>

For years, Littlefield held his organization together, though many of his best and oldest men—following the advice of their employer—had started outfits of their own, either with savings or with the backing of the Major. Yet Phelps White still sat deep in the saddle for the Littlefield interests, and seldom—only about once a year—did Major

<sup>12</sup> Hardy and Roberts, as cited, II, 891-92.

<sup>13</sup> C. J. Ballard to J. E. H. and Hervey Chesley, June 9, 1939.

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Littlefield visit the ranch. Even in the early days, however, before the country was crossed by rail, they made provision whereby, in case of emergency, Littlefield could get in touch with his manager. The nearest telegraph station was at Fort Stanton, seventy-five miles west of Roswell, and, according to accounts, the post sutler there had a standing order to put a man on a horse any time a message came for Phelps White and send it to the ranch, one hundred and forty miles away.<sup>14</sup> Horses and men! That was the measure of the western world, and the LFDs measured up.

Even though they were sometimes short on chuck, they were long on horses, at times having a horse herd of fourteen hundred head. They bought many in the San Antonio country, sold their old horses on the trail, and kept the others in remudas wherever their camps and wagons were located. For winter use, each cowpuncher kept his favorite mounts near at hand, feeding each three tomato cans of corn a day, and concentrated the others at a horse camp on the edge of the breaks under the care of one man, usually old Harry Robertson.<sup>15</sup>

And where there were real horses at that day and time, there were real men to ride them. For though the LFD still ran an economical outfit, paying little to its efficient hands and feeding them the simplest fare, it was noted for generous remudas and ability to handle stock; and in the West of that day not shekels and security but horseflesh and pride held men to their places around a herd in fair weather and foul. Among the strange cavalcade that comes riding out of the

<sup>14</sup> Lucius Dills to J. E. H., March 4, 1937.

<sup>15</sup> W. B. McCombs to J. E. H., March 4, 1937; Edgar Harral to J. E. H., June 13, 1939.

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past are some colorful characters who should be silhouetted by the fading glow from the bull-chip fires on the LFD.

Phelps White played a tremendous part in the Littlefield fortunes. He was loyal to his "Uncle George," and he knew the cow business from the salt grass of the coastal plains to the saline springs of the Pecos. He was a real cowpuncher, good with a rope, good on a horse, experienced on the range, and successful by the exacting standards of the balance sheets. Born at Gonzales, December 2, 1856, five years before his uncle was to march off to war, he rode behind Littlefield's saddle as a boy, when his crippled uncle was managing a plantation from the back of a horse. He grew up in a time of uncertainty and change, but under a routine of responsibility and in an atmosphere of thrift and frugality. Was there a significance deeper than a passing fancy in the fact that he constantly hummed a little refrain that ran: "Always keep a little tobacco in your old tobacco box"?

When Major Littlefield passed his father's house on the trail to Kansas in 1871, about five miles out from Gonzales, he penned there for the night. He had a mixed herd, and as little calves could not make the drive, he was giving them away. He told Phelps and his brother Tom that they could have all they could catch out of the herd. They caught nine, and that, said White, "was my start in the cattle business."

He became the wealthiest man in the Pecos Valley; by 1920 his interest in the Littlefield Cattle Company was calculated at two million dollars. He shared Major Littlefield's generous benefactions, but, significant of his own sentiment and character, late in his own life White told a Roswell friend that he would rather his Uncle George had said in his will, "Phelps White helped me make my money," than

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to have been left the fortune. Littlefield had left the money but forgot the sentiment.

White became seriously ill when he was seventy-eight years of age, was placed on an airplane to be flown to San Antonio for medical attention, and remarked at the time, it is said, that he had come to the Pecos Valley over fifty years before on a Texas cow horse and was leaving in an airplane, but that when they brought him back he would be dead. His premonition was right.<sup>16</sup>

Under the general manager on every large ranch are a number of skilled hands who go about their respective jobs in an individualistic way, no matter how dynamic and able may be the man who carries the burden of the business. Most of them have seen much of life, and, being generally unmarried, they often nurse the dry wit and the cynicism of advancing age cushioned by no softening feminine influence. They harbor an abundance of personal traits and eccentricities that prompt women to call them contrary and writers to call them characters. And thus it appears that some of the least should be remembered as among the greatest—whether trail drivers, windmillers, camp men, or just regular cowpunchers.

Among those who were saturated with the saga of the Pecos, and likewise were a part of the Littlefield story, were the three Walker boys, Littlefield's nephews, and from Gonzales of course. Rufe, Walter, and Charlie Walker were cowpunchers from the tips of their high-heeled boots to the crowns of their Stetson hats. Charlie was small of stature

<sup>16</sup> He died October 21, 1934, and was buried at Roswell. Lucius Dills to J. E. H., March 4, 1937; C. D. Bonney to J. E. H., March 6, 1937; Frank Collinson to J. E. H., March 3, 1939; J. Phelps White to J. E. H., March 2, 1933; Mrs J. P. White to J. E. H., August 5, 1937.

but big of heart, abundantly resourceful and quietly courageous. He drove thousands of Littlefield cattle on the trail and looked after the Littlefield interests wherever he found them. At one time Tom, or "Black Jack" Ketchem, who was later hanged at Clayton for repeated robberies, was working with Walker's outfit as a regular hand.

In 1891, Walker had Black Jack and his brother Sam on the trail with a herd headed for the Osage Nation. All was moving along peacefully and contentedly, when the Ketchems inadvisedly rawhided a quiet country boy who could have sung with little qualification:

*Down from Arkansas I came  
Prepared to play a pretty tough game,  
So when the roundups had begun,  
I thought, just for fun,  
I'd see how cowpunchin' was done.*

That day Charlie Walker had left the outfit and ridden on ahead to look out the country over which they were trailing. When he came back, he saw only one man, riding furiously to hold the cattle in herd. He loped back to the wagon and there he found the quiet boy called "Arkansas" in a down-right talkative mood. He had gone to the wagon, dug out Walker's sixshooter from where it was safely carried for use in limited emergencies, and was paying his unlimited respects to the men from the Conchos called Sam and Black Jack Ketchem:

"You have run it over me ever since I have been here. If you open your mouth to me again in any other than a gentlemanly way, I'll spit in your left eye, and if you don't resent that I'll spit in your right eye, and if you don't resent



*Charlie Walker*

that, I'll kick you out of this outfit. Get your guns and go to fighting!"

But they did not get them, and so Arkansas added, by way of benediction, "if you don't leave me alone I'll kill you whether you fight or not!"

"And by God," Charlie Walker admiringly closed the story, "they never did bother him no more."

This was not the last that was heard of the Ketchems. They came back to the ranch and "began to get sort of careless," and Walker made out their time and sent it to "Catfish" George Smith, the bookkeeper at headquarters. They went in to get it, and while they were there Phelps

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White heard Tom say that he was going to whip Walker before he left. White climbed in his buckboard and hurried down to the wagon to tell Walker what had been said, before the Ketchems got back for supper. They rode up without saying anything, and Walker, who had made up his mind to kill them, got out his "frontier social security" and said:

"Tom, I understand you're going to whip me before you leave this outfit. By God, you better get at it right now!" Tom didn't get at it, but started to walk up to the tail-end of the wagon and get his plate, when Walker stopped him, saying:

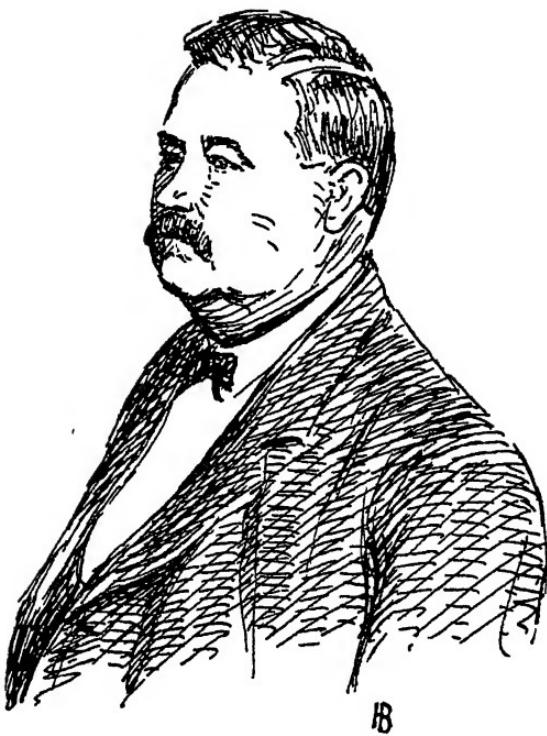
"You can't eat supper. You get out of here right away!"

"Aw, let them have their supper," White interposed, but Walker refused, and they "lit a shuck" that night. "I never heard nothing more of them," Walker said; except, of course, everybody heard of the death of Sam and the hanging of Black Jack, and how they jerked his head off at Clayton.<sup>17</sup>

And yet it was not all beef and brawn, and battle and blood, for the happy side of human nature was represented by another Littlefield nephew—Phelps White's brother—the rotund, genial Tom White. While he never approached Phelps White in executive ability, his knowledge of horses, cattle, and range investments was sound, and, when possible, his managing brother consulted him on every trade he made. His initial investment of two hundred and fifty dollars in the Littlefield Company stood him a personal interest of half a million at the time of his death in 1914.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Charles W. Walker to J. E. H., August 5, 1937. For an extended account of Black Jack, see A. W. Thompson's excellent brochure, *The Story of Early Clayton, New Mexico*, 63-87.

<sup>18</sup> Littlefield, "Autobiographical Sketch," 15; Lucius Dills to J. E. H., March 4, 1937.



*Tom White*

There were other Tom Whites—"T Bar Tom" White of the Midland country—and in distinction Littlefield's nephew was called "LFD Tom." When frugality, management, and grass had finally brought prosperity, Tom and his brother Phelps made a trip East "to see what was the other side of Fort Worth," as one cowpuncher put it. They stood mute before the mighty spectacle of Niagara until Tom, from the land of little water, spoke above the roar of the falls to observe:

"That would be a fine place to water a herd, Brother Phelps."<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Frank Collinson to J. E. H., March 3, 1939.

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Rarely did Tom find himself at a loss for something to say. In fact, he developed a wide reputation for talking—"augering," in the idiom of the day—and he would auger the hours away with anyone who happened along. According to V. Whitlock, one of the old LFD hands, "the only man on the plains who could out-talk 'LFD' Tom White" was "Mase" Beal, of the Jumbo ranch, who was not only a great talker, but a provoking, not to say provocative, one. At least he must have seemed so to Tom, for when he stayed overnight at the Four Lakes headquarters, before they went to bed, after they had gone to bed, and far into the night, the cowpunchers could hear Mase and Tom holding forth. Again and again LFD Tom would start off—

"As I was going to say" . . . , but that would be as far as he got, for Mase John Beal would cut in on him and drown him out. And the first thing next morning, as each man rummaged for his boots in the dark, preparatory for the general break toward the coffeepot, he would hear Tom say:

"As I was going to say last night" . . . , but again the voice of Beal would drown him out, and Tom<sup>20</sup> would quit the drive in ignominious silence.

Besides general managers, foremen and trail bosses, these western outfits had their windmillers, and George Jefferson, the tart and prickly partner of the Causeys, kept camp on the lower end of the ranch in a style befitting a surviving former captive of the Indians and a veteran of the buffalo range.

In 1877 he was one of the hunters with Captain Nolan, some of whose men perished for want of water during his badly managed scout after Indians into the sand country im-

<sup>20</sup> V. Whitlock, Manuscript, "Yellowhouse Canyon," 292.

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mediately east of the LFDs. Jeff was a diminutive man, weighing only about one hundred and twenty pounds, and he marched off into the desert wilderness when the break-up came and the soldiers were dying, carrying his twelve-pound Sharp's gun. All that he could remember, when the ordeal was over and he was back on the welcome water of the Yellow Houses, was that he had killed an antelope and drunk its blood. And then, as we have seen, he wound up a frontier career by becoming a windmill man.

Passing cowpunchers, headed for the LFD "work" with a mount of horses, sometimes had the misfortune to stop at his camp and suffer his unique hospitality. Stopping places were few and far between, and the experience of one cowboy is typical. He jogged up on a tired horse as the sun slid toward the flat rim of the far horizon, looked down at Old Jeff, bade him a pleasant good evening, and said:

"I'd like to spend the night with you!"

"I knew you would," came the dry response, "when I saw you coming." The tired cowpuncher, having stepped off his horse, and feeling a little sensitive at this rebuff from advanced age, glanced at his packed bed and wondered, in an impersonal sort of way:

"Reckon I could sleep somewhere around here?"

"Hell, yes! The world's open—you can sleep anywhere around here," replied Jeff. Quietly debating whether he should be amused or insulted, the cowpuncher threw off his saddle and bed, while old Jeff fussed with the stove inside until his visitor came in, and then commanded:

"Don't touch a thing! I'll fix you something to eat." When it was fixed, he shoved it onto the kitchen table under the cowboy's nose with a special blessing:

"By God, there it is if you want it, and if you don't, by God there it is anyway." And the cowboy, quietly thinking to himself, "damned if it ain't," ate his fill, wiped the bean juice clean from his plate with a last hunk of bread, which he crammed into his mouth, straightened up, and in the custom of the times, said:

"I'll wash up the dishes."

"If you're so damned anxious to work why don't you get a job," roared the hospitable host, who forthwith washed the dishes himself.<sup>21</sup>

Besides these hands, there were wagon cooks. One of the most noted was "Curley, the Crow," who, in spite of his kinky head, claimed he was a Crow Indian and a scout for Custer; but that, naturally, he was absent when Custer and all his men were killed. The boys tolerated his lying, however, because of the virtues of his peach pies baked in a Dutch oven, his sweetened tomatoes thickened with cold sour dough bread, and his rice and raisins cooked to a cowboy's taste. To prove that he was really tough and worthy of his name, he always went barefooted, and patted the red-hot coals down on his skillets of bread with the sole of his foot.<sup>22</sup>

At headquarters, living in comparative comfort, was another character, the bookkeeper, who, because of the size of his mouth, was called "Catfish" George Smith. He kept the commissary, which must have been on a paying basis, for when he laid out a purchase for a cowpuncher who kicked at the cost, he settled the argument as he posted the charge on the time book with the cryptic comment:

<sup>21</sup> Bob Beverley to J. E. H., June 23, 1937.

<sup>22</sup> V. Whitlock, "Yellowhouse Canyon," 179.

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"Freight!"

He carried the traditions of Masonry to the short-grass range, and even yet mention of his name will bring an appreciative remark from old-timers in the Pecos country to the effect that:

"Catfish made me a Mason."

Acquaintance with the balance sheets of business had convinced Catfish that nature finally exacts her own settlements, and with a burst of genuine Pecos River humanitarianism, he refused to say a bad word about any man, but would roll the loose hide on his head like the skin on a mule, open his big mouth, and air his generous views:

"If you can't do anything for this man, don't do anything against him. He'll get to hell soon enough."<sup>28</sup>

Before leaving the story of the LFDs and this catalogue of cowpunchers, at least the dusky suggestion of one other—old Nigger Add—properly emerges here. With no loss of the sense of benevolent mastery or social hierarchy, Littlefield loved his Negroes. They were a part of his early life, a part of his embattled retinue in his unremitting economic struggle, a part of his southern tradition. Hence there is a certain poetic fitness, in the life of a man devoid of poetry, that his own country and his own outfit should produce the most noted Negro cowboy that ever "topped off" a horse.

Nigger Add drifted up from the Guadalupe bottoms to the high plains, and he chose the tough horses as they came. He was a familiar figure at every general roundup, and a welcome one, for, when the wagons started and the horses were fresh, he sapped out the salty ones for the boys who

<sup>28</sup> D. J. Miller to J. E. H., June 23, 1937; Edgar Harral to Hervey Chesley and J. E. H., as cited; V. Whitlock, "Yellowhouse Canyon," 60.



*"... scattering pots and pans ..."*

dreaded to ride them. It was nothing unusual for him to top off several horses of a morning, in order to get the pitching out of their systems before the outfit started on the drive, and he "kicked the living daylights" out of those jug-headed horses that didn't know when to stop. He rode as if he had been born to ride, and he raked hide and hair with his flashing spurs every time a horse "swallered his head and fell to pieces." So far as the old-timers know, he was never thrown but once, and then by a horse called Whistling Bullet—a bronc that whistled through his nose. Add never suffered the embarrassment that befell another LFD Negro, called Lasses, who was thrown over the fence at Jerry Dunaway's ranch, and who jumped up, bowing and scraping, hat in hand, apologizing to Mrs. Dunaway for having been thrown into her front yard.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> J. D. Hart to J. E. H., June 24, 1937; D. J. Miller, as cited; Bob Beverley, as cited; Mrs. Jerry Dunaway to J. E. H., June 23, 1937.

#### THE FOUR LAKES RANCH

Old Add was a horseman—he could tell what a horse was thinking about by looking him in the eye. He was stocky and powerfully built, and, it is said, had such a tremendous grip that he could get any horse by the ear and practically twist the hide off. He was a favorite with the Littlefield outfit, and Phelps White would bet anybody that Add could walk into a corral full of broncs, get any one by ear and nose with his bare hands, smother him down and lead him out of the bunch. His mount was always made up of the worst horses in the outfit, and it was not unusual for his night horse "to come unwound" when Add started out to stand guard and pitch through the middle of the camp, scattering pots and pans and sleepy eyed cowboys. They cursed him then, but they blessed him when he took the sap out of the outlaws they drew in their own mounts, which he was always able and willing to do.

Like the celebrated hand in the cowboy ballad, "he could ride 'em, he could rope 'em, he could show 'em how it was done." He possessed a peculiar knack in roping, handling



a rope with a wild abandon that would have killed an ordinary man. He would tie a rope hard and fast around his hips, hem a horse up in the corner of a corral or in the open pasture, rope him around the neck as he went past at full speed, and, where another man would have been dragged to death, Add would, by sheer skill and power on the end of a rope, invariably flatten the horse out on the ground.

V. Whitlock and Old Add were staying at the Bar F horse camp one time when all their horses got out and left them afoot. Add tied two catch ropes together, fastened the end of one around his hips, built a good loop in the other end, and hid near the water trough until the bunch came in to drink. While they were drinking he eased out behind them, threw a long loop and caught one as the surprised horses "took to the tules." Add failed to throw him, and the terrified horse took Add sailing off through the mesquites, his leggin's sounding like a dry beef hide tied onto a wild mare's tail. The horse soon choked down and in a few minutes Add came leading him back.

"It wuz me an him fur 'bout half a mile," he said. "Then it wuz me!"

At another time, according to Whitlock, who knew him well:

"Add was sitting on a Bar F roping horse in front of the Grand Central Hotel in Roswell one morning when a driverless team of horses, hitched to a milk wagon, came down the street, running away.

"He always kept his rope tied hard and fast to his saddle horn, and when he saw the team coming, he jerked down his rope, built a long loop, ran along side of them and caught them both around the necks. He then pitched the slack over

#### THE FOUR LAKES RANCH

the wagon, dropped over in his left stirrup and turned off, stacking the whole works in the middle of the street.

"The wagon was wrecked, milk was all over the street, and every bottle was broken. When the driver came and removed the rope, Add came slowly riding back and said: 'Them hosses shure would have tore things up if I hadn't caught them.' "

Perhaps the lasting assurance of Old Add's fame is the fact that he is remembered not only in story, but in song, and on the cattle ranges, where no man can carry a tune, this is equivalent to immortality. John A. Lomax, in his widely appreciated volume, *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*, under the title of "Whose Old Cow," gives all the words, but, probably like the men who sang it, leaves no suggestion of a tune. Anyway, the "song" tells the story of a general roundup and the gathering of a herd for the trail. The cowboys had trimmed it up and were cutting out the strays:

*Well, after each outfit had worked on the band  
There was only three head of them left;  
When Nig Add from the LFD outfit rode in,—  
A dictionary on earmarks and brands.*

*He cut two head out, told where they belonged;  
But when the last cow stood there alone  
Add's eyes bulged so he didn't know just what to say,  
'Ceptin', "Boss, dere's something here monstrous wrong!  
White folks smarter'n Add, and maybe I se wrong;  
But here's six months' wages dat I'll give  
If anyone'll tell me when I reads dis mark  
To who dis longhorned cow belong!*

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*Overslope in right ear and de underbill,  
Lef' ear swaller fork an' de undercrop,  
Hole punched in center, an' de jinglebob  
Under half crop, an' de slash an' split.*

*She's got O-Block an' Lightnin' Rod,  
Nine Forty-Six an' a Bar Eleven,  
T Terrapin an' Ninety-Seven  
Rafter Cross an' de Double Prod.*

*Half Circle A an' Diamond D,  
Four Cross L and Three PZ,  
BWI Bar, XVV,  
Bar N Cross an' ALC.*

*So, if none o' you punchers claims dis cow,  
Mr. Stock 'Sociation needn't git 'larmed:  
For one more brand more or less won't do no harm,  
So old Nigger Add'l just brand her now.”<sup>25</sup>*

There was never a Littlefield horse too rough for Add to handle; never a Littlefield trail too long for him to ride. He rode until he was so crippled with rheumatism that he could not get on a horse; and then, like a man whose work is well done, he lay down on his bed and died—else, as Bob Beverley said in admiring benediction, “he’d have been riding yet.”

With such men as these did the Littlefield ranches efficiently meet the manifold problems of the short-grass country; the problems of drift and storm, water and drouth, de-

<sup>25</sup> Jack Potter to J. E. H., June 24, 1939; Walter Walker, as cited; D. J. Miller, as cited; V. Whitlock, “Yellowhouse Canyon,” 245–46; George Read to Hervey Chesley and J. E. H., June 9, 1939; Edgar F. Harral to Hervey Chesley and J. E. H., June 13, 1939.

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pression and change. The manner in which they met these problems was vitally important. No less so, however, was the measured financial judgment and backing of Littlefield himself, who now sat in his office at Austin with his hand on the pulse of the business world, the distant processes of which determined the value of his cattle on the remote New Mexico ranges.

The LFD had stable backing; Littlefield had dynamic men. Together, they left their enduring marks and brands, as well as a brave tradition, in a land of grass and change.



## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### IN THE SERVICE OF THE FAMILY

LITTLEFIELD'S range enterprises, vast as they were, did not command his entire time. He had projected his ideas, plans, and personality through the medium of his trained and trusted men, until, in effect, the details of the business ran themselves. That was management. And while the control was always remote, the feeling of responsibility was always imminent. That was discipline. But when the man is viewed nearer home, through the medium of his life and all-too-few letters, it may be seen that much of his time, thought, and means were devoted to the service of his family. Though childless, he harbored a strongly paternal family feeling.

While his great range venture was in New Mexico, he was too close to the cattle and land of Texas not to continue actively in the business there. Though he quit farming early, he still raised cattle in the Gonzales country. The first place he acquired outside the plantation holdings was the Foster ranch, twelve miles up the San Marcos River from Gonzales, and south of the town of Luling. Late in the seventies he bought six thousand acres of breeding range there which was fenced with rails and wire. Anxious to get all his nephews out of town and into the country, he first placed Will White

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in charge of this ranch, but found that Will was still too close to town to suit him.

The nature of his help to his family, and his method of planning, is indicated in a letter he wrote to Shelton Dowell from Kansas City, where he was active in the cattle trade, in 1880:

How would it suit you to take a  $\frac{1}{2}$  interest in the Foster Ranch & Farm & Pasture. Provided I can get Will to agree to come to the Panhandle of Texas with what Cattle He has down there next Spring. I may if you want to take an interest in it Get Him to move the cows & 2 year Hiefers in September, so as to allow you to go on the place to prepare for the next years crop . . . Will has been getting  $\frac{1}{3}$  interest in the Profits, which ought to of been good—But he is so extravagant that I dont think He will ever do much anny where unless on the Frontier—I think the lands cost me about \$12,000 Dollars—There is near 6,000 acres. You can have  $\frac{1}{2}$  interest at that rate on time. \$1,000 00/100 dollars annually—the first two, 2 notes not to bear interest but the others to bear interest at rate 7 per cent per annum, dating from Jany 1881 . . . if the pasture can be well stocked with young cattle every winter there will be no truble about its paying you well I am afraid White will not want to go to the Frontier to live—You Know He is a great Town man. Cigars & Toddy goes a long ways with him—I will write to him as soon as I hear from you—<sup>1</sup>

A month later he wrote: "I think every thing can be arranged with Will White to sell out the Pasture and Ranch.

<sup>1</sup> George W. Littlefield to Shelton Dowell, May 17, 1880, Dowell Papers.

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But He wants to wind up the crop—And winter what cattle we have there on the 1st day of September. That will not interfere with us putting in 700 Head of young cattle in the Pasture and you could move over there in October, after I get home—”<sup>2</sup> With slight modifications, the plan worked out: Dowell took an interest in the ranch through credits extended by his Uncle, and White, instead of going to the Panhandle frontier, where Littlefield meanwhile had sold out, went over on the Plum Creek, or Dinner Bell ranch, near Kyle, Texas, the land that Littlefield acquired from Ellison in the fall of 1882.

Littlefield, writing of himself in his impersonal autobiographical notes, said:

He bought the 13 200 Acres of land on Elm fork of Plum Creek Hays Caldwell and Travis counties a \$3.30 per Acre. Stocked it in fall and then followed a hard winter In spring of 1883 found He had lost \$62,000<sup>00</sup> The winter was bad He had allowed his nephew J W White to sell and interest he held with him In Gonzales Co [the Foster Ranch] for \$6000<sup>00</sup> in notes. He received the notes as cash Balance on time taking in his nephew as  $\frac{1}{4}$  interest. The nephew was discouraged after the great loss—Littlefield told him to go to New Mexico He would put a stock of cattle in the LFDs and allow him to still hold \$6000<sup>00</sup> Interest. He bought and moved to New Mexico Ranch 4000 Head of cattle in fall of 1883 and spring of 1884—<sup>3</sup>

This account was retrospective and it is interesting to

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, June 22, 1880.

<sup>3</sup> Littlefield, “Autobiographical Sketch,” 9-10.

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observe that in the spring of 1884 the Major was writing Dowell, who then was in charge of the Plum Creek ranch—having again taken Will White's place on May 1, 1883—that he had “figured up the old Foster Ranch account and find there is a big loss in it. But you know how it came up you know if there had been no die in cattle, and the lands had of held out anything like what we anticipated that you would have made a big thing . . . You know I have tried to help you in everything and I believe in the Plum Creek Ranch you will do well . . . I am working so as to make everything pay and at same time arranging to help you all . . . I feel it my duty to arrange something to get Edgar started out, and to give Bill a chance to do something.”

Edgar Harral, of whom he wrote, was his sister's son, and Bill was his own happy-go-lucky brother. But these were not all. In the same letter tendering help to Dowell, he regretted a recent obligation that took six thousand dollars of his own cash, for “I really needed that money . . . and then McCarty [of the LFD] finds a cheap bunch of cattle and it takes \$8,000.00 to get them, and His Ranch is like the P. C. [Plum Creek pasture] needs them in order to make business pay I buy them for Him. This will fix Mack all O. K. and your place will be very well fixed. Next comes Edgar & Bill if I find they will bear fixing—” And so it went for them all; he plied them with advice and backed them with money.

At the same time he appealed to their pride and their sense of loyalty, as in another letter to Dowell: “You boys should endeavor to make every thing pay well, for I have been so good to you all—Remember not many men do this way . . . When I see you again we will settle up, every thing. And as far as the loss in Foster Ranch is concerned

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I dont care for it if our business is run all right—I dont want you or any of the Boys to loose anything and will not let you do so if you will always treat me and my business right—”

The range problems he touched upon then were much the same as those of today. His advice was to keep the country stocked with good, young cattle. “The Money that you get from proceeds of the Steers . . . you had better keep . . . to your credit with the Bank. So as if an extra good trade should show up you could be able to take it on.” And again there was the matter of timeliness in trade: “Now dont wait later than May 20th to buy what Cattle you may need for it might be that parties who have contracted there cattle up north, would sent parties back to buy down there—” Already there was the question of quality and territory: “You had better take a little trip over in Bell & Williamson Counties [he wrote in 1884]. The best cattle in our State are raised over there, and they Sell about as cheap as cattle near our pasture—and I tell you they are worth \$1.50 per Head more than our Cattle—” He ordered his nephews to buy, delivered at the ranch, and “dont forget to Counterbrand every thing well,” for of course some might get out and go home. “Now I want you to invest the cash in such cattle as will pay us best—”

A few days later, with his hand on the pulse of the market at Kansas City, he wrote: “I find that there are going to be a great deal better Demand for cattle up here than I expected to see. do not Say anny thing about it, but buy as long as you have money at prices we have talked . . . The pasture should cary at least 3000 Cattle . . . I am of Opinion that you will buy them very cheap after the Kansas drivers get off.” He advised the boys not to buy “any broke

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down Road brand Cattle off trail this Spring, for, they never come out and do anny good."

Dillard Fant had written asking help for his outfits in passing, and Littlefield told his boys to "please treat His men as well as you can," but not to buy his "broke down" trail cattle. Instead, they could take them in to pasture at what was then the high price of fifty cents per head a month, and "He will surely come after them soon." He wrote also about fencing, roads, horses, mules, stock cattle and trail cattle, and the necessity of thrifty use of time and money.<sup>4</sup>

He sent Will White to the LFD, on the Pecos, with a herd of cattle, and took him into partnership in the Littlefield Cattle Company. In July, 1884, he sold out the Plum Creek ranch, and, in writing Dowell his regrets that it would be necessary for him to move again, he explained that "you Know its not to my interest to hold that Land when I can get such a price as I am offered." That land went into farms, and when he and Dowell failed to negotiate a lease for the winter, they shipped their cattle to Pecos and drove them up the river to the New Mexico ranch. Next spring Dowell took up the trail from Pecos a horse herd which Phelps White had sold at a good profit before he even got there. Thus with the three White boys, Shelton Dowell, C. S. McCarty, Bud Wilkerson, Bill Littlefield, and even old nigger Nath, all ranching in New Mexico with Littlefield's backing, there was the optimistic prospect that all were about to get "well-fixed."<sup>5</sup>

In the meantime, the provident uncle had not forgotten

<sup>4</sup> George W. Littlefield to Shelton Dowell, March 24 and April 1, 1884, Dowell Papers.

<sup>5</sup> Dowell Papers, July 7, August 15 and 27, 1884, and March 6, 1885. Also S. C. Dowell to Mrs. Dowell, April 10, 20 and 25, 1885.

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Edgar Harral. In enlarging the LFD country, simply by trying, in the western way, to take in all that they needed and "that which joined them," he had Harral in mind when he bought the ranch at the site of Lovington. After helping Will White take a herd of the Dinner Bell cattle up the river to the LFD from Pecos, Edgar Harral had gone off to school on a trainload of cattle, returned to Gonzales, and gone to work in the post office there. Littlefield wrote Harral in the summer of 1886 to come to Austin, met him at the train, and handed him a letter, addressed to Phelps White, in which he instructed White to turn the O JIM ranch and 336 mother cows over to Harral. These were to become his own after he had stayed with them for twelve months.

Harral went out to take charge of the ranch which had been located by Jim Campbell, who had taken up a claim and dug out a surface tank. He stayed from August, 1886, until early in 1887, when Phelps White came by, following the wagon tracks that had just been made "from Four Lakes to Midland." He was on his way to the cattlemen's convention at Fort Worth. Harral was suffering from a tooth-ache, and the place was rather lonesome besides, so he decided to join White on the trip to the civilized world—or at least as near thereto as Fort Worth lay. It took them four days to get to Midland, and when the midnight train came through they climbed aboard for the cow town. When they walked into the lobby of the old Pickwick Hotel, there sat their "Uncle George," then one of the leaders in the Texas Live Stock Association. When he caught sight of Harral, he exclaimed:

"What are you doing here?"

"I am going to give you back that ranch," said Harral.

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"Just what I thought. Where are you going?" the Major asked.

"I am going to Montana," replied Harral. But when his Uncle asked what he "could do in that cold country," he did not exactly know. After the convention was over Littlefield told him to go back to the Staked Plains of New Mexico.

"You go back and go to work for the LFD," he said. "I am taking four hundred black muley cows and want you to take charge of them down below the cap rock."

"I will be by myself?" asked Harral.

"It wont be quite so lonesome," the Major replied, as it was nearer Roswell. Then he added: "I am going to brand you one hundred heifers." Observing that "there is something to that," Harral went back and looked after the herd of black muleys, from which the owner thought he would produce bulls, until that particular venture was abandoned, and then he went to work steady for the LFDs.<sup>6</sup>

Back in Texas, during this time, Littlefield had shifted his base of operations from the country below Austin to the hill country to the west. In the late eighties, out in Mason County, he bought the Mill Creek ranch from John W. Gamel—forty-five thousand acres at \$1.55 an acre. In 1888 he moved Will White back from the LFD, giving him twelve thousand dollars for his interest out there, and carrying him for the balance of a one-fourth interest in the Gamel ranch. He acquired the Little Elm Creek ranch from Major Seth Mabry, in Kimble County, a range capable of carrying four thousand steers, and placed in charge another nephew, John White, from Mississippi.

<sup>6</sup> Edgar Harral to J. E. H., January 2, 1940; Harral to Hervey Chesley and J. E. H., June 13, 1939.

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Later he moved Edgar Harral to the place, and Harral ran it from 1898 to 1903. In 1896 Littlefield acquired Mabry's Saline Pasture, just across the Llano River from the Mill Creek ranch—fifty thousand acres at \$2.00 an acre, and two years later the Menard County pasture of thirty thousand acres from the same man. White became a partner in both the lands and cattle. The Mill Creek and adjoining Saline was a fine piece of property, and again, like the others, in the Major's own words, "it run successfully," and it made White wealthy<sup>7</sup> in his own right.

It is obvious that Littlefield's views as to the ownership of land had undergone a radical change since he lay under the LIT wagon with Jot Gunter, in the late seventies, and observed that he would just as soon pay for the blue sky above him as for the Texas soil beneath. In fact, as chairman of the executive committee of the Texas Live Stock Association, meeting in Dallas in January, 1887, he aired his views on land, cattle, and the general economy. It was estimated that, during the past three years, in the general depression of prices and the attendant drouth, half of the men in the cattle business had gone broke, with a total loss of over one hundred millions of dollars. Commenting upon the great resilience of the industry, however, Littlefield observed that it was still carrying on, despite the fact that prices had dropped, during the previous two years, from twenty dollars to ten dollars for an average cow. He urged home markets for livestock, the cowman's participation in the establishment of packing houses—"refrigerating establishments"—and em-

<sup>7</sup> Edgar Harral to J. E. H., as cited; J. W. White to J. E. H., March 21, 1937; J. W. White to Brockman Horne, September 9, 1936; Littlefield, "Autobiographical Sketch," 11; Hardy and Roberts, *Historical Review of South-East Texas*, II, 891; Daniell, *Men of Texas*, 352.

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phasized the folly of shipping beef on the hoof to Chicago and buying it back in steaks in Texas.

In a letter to John N. Simpson, the association president, late in December, 1887, he had taken up the matter of a home market. While he endorsed the movement to build up the yards at St. Louis, he felt that this was "not . . . quite all that Texas needs." He suggested a state market to keep Texas money at home; wanted "a refrigerating establishment at Houston . . . because that is the railroad center of the State;" and argued that this would help to stem the decline of the industry generally.

At the convention he condemned the lack of state quarantine laws and the arbitrary action and rigid rates of the State Land Board, urged a deep water port on the Gulf of Mexico, reminded everyone of the staying qualities of the industry; and, while he said nothing about government relief, he urged the cowmen of Texas to sit deep in their saddles and stay with their cows.

"The outside world looks on," he continued. "Moneyed men and capitalists can and will see our staying powers. And the prudent, economical ranchman who uses proper energy will profit by the pressure on the country. He will not allow excited markets to allure or lead him astray, but will watch well the outgoings of his business. He will know so long as this country continues to grow beef will be in demand, and that they who own the grazing lands must produce the beef, and when the next generation of cattlemen hold control it will be seen and realized that he who owns the land and produces the beef will be the well-fixed independent man of the country."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *The Dallas News*, December 29, 1886, and January 12, 1887.

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From Littlefield, an open range cowman of a few years before and a representative of that group still being branded by the press and the politicians as bloated "bullionaires" and reactionary cowmen, this sounded revolutionary indeed. As usual, with his penetrating business acumen, with an element of prophecy and a sense of successful speculation—and the two are closely related—Littlefield went even farther in his outline for the future pattern of his industry.

"Here in Texas we have the agricultural lands in abundance," he continued, "and the grass lands lay right alongside them. . . . Many of our ranchmen have good lands that will produce rich feed for cattle. Hold it for the day when thrifty, wide awake ranchmen will see the necessity of growing on it such crops as will help to keep and fatten his stock."<sup>9</sup>

Thus Littlefield, as evidenced by his ventures in the hill country range, was suiting his action to his words. And as crowding nesters on the Staked Plains of eastern New Mexico began to hamper the LFDs, he began dickering with the owners of the XIT ranch, the Farwells of Chicago, for the Yellow House division of the Capitol Syndicate. Did he foresee the fruition thereon of his prophecy to the cowmen at Dallas regarding the production of feed and the demand for farming? Though the prospect was to be years in the flower-ing, and not unprofitable years at that, his prophecy was realized.

In 1901, Major Littlefield bought the Yellow Houses, the southernmost division of the greatest ranch in Texas. It consisted of 235,858 acres of plains land located in Hockley, Lamb, Bailey and Cochran counties, for which he paid \$2.00

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, January 12, 1887.

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an acre, with a down payment in cash of \$272,000, and the balance in notes due in from one to six years at 6 per cent interest, and payable "on or before." Every note, to his satisfaction and pride, was paid before its maturity.

At the same time, he bought five thousand XIT cows, with calves by their side, topped from a herd of nine thousand head, at forty dollars around, with two hundred registered Hereford bulls; and the same summer moved more than ten thousand cattle from the LFD to the Yellow Houses. Soon afterward a prairie fire almost burned the ranch out, and Phelps White, out in his buckboard fighting it, was caught in a fence corner when the wind suddenly changed, and was almost burned to death as he fled back to the burned-over ground.

Tom and Phelps White came in on the new venture for one-half interest, the Major carrying them for their part of the investment. When the Santa Fe Railroad made its cutoff from Lubbock to Clovis, slicing 32,000 acres from the main pasture as it cut through their domain, Littlefield added a like amount on the other side to make a square tract of 64,000 acres. The town of Littlefield, on the railroad, became the center of this tract, and as the Whites wanted to cut down their indebtedness, they proposed to sell their interest in the tract to the Major. He bought it at \$9.00 an acre, in 1912 began putting it on the market to farmers, and by 1916 had sold 30,000 acres on easy terms at from \$15 to \$35 an acre.

The Littlefield Lands, as the project was known, became an important South Plains development, and since Littlefield's death that sandy section, rich in the production of feeds, has achieved note as a cattle feeding area that fully

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justifies the prophecy of the founder of the town, made fifty years before.<sup>10</sup>

Throughout these years other interests had occupied a part of Littlefield's time. The most important of them was banking. From the humble start in connection with the mercantile business at Gonzales, the growth of his acquaintance with the cowmen of the Southwest, his ready grasp of the problems of land and cattle finance, and his own aptitude in the field of business, it was as natural as the trail of a cow to a watering place that he should gravitate into banking. To be nearer the center of business, he moved to Austin in 1883, where he became associated with Ike T. Pryor, an orphan boy who had drifted out of the South, into Texas, and into the trail business.

In Austin Pierre Bremond, one of the leaders of that day, insisted that Littlefield become a director of the State National Bank, but in 1890 the Major sold his stock back to Bremond and organized a bank of his own—the American National. It was a distinctly southern institution from the standpoint of personnel, sympathies, and capital. He called a meeting of the subscribers at the Driskill Hotel on the afternoon of April 10, 1890, and its organization was perfected, with Littlefield as president, John H. Houghton, vice president, and William R. Hamby, cashier. The other directors of the bank were Ike T. Pryor, L. A. Ellis, E. M. House, M. Butler, Edwin Wilson, J. G. Duffield, John H. Robinson, and H. D. Patrick.

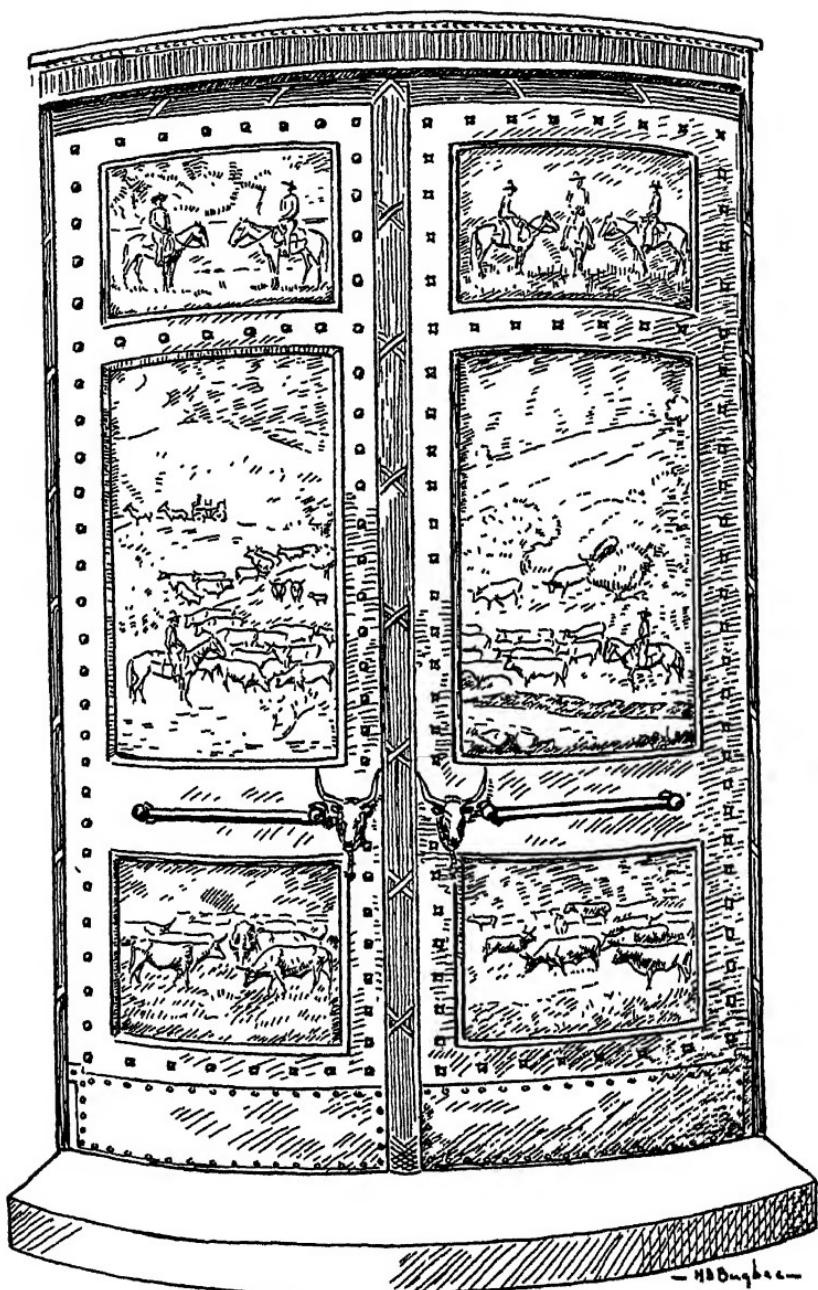
<sup>10</sup> XIT Map, for exact acreage of Yellow House Division, Dalhart office, The Capitol Lands Trust; Littlefield, "Autobiographical Sketch," 14-15; *San Antonio Express*, June 4, 1916; B. P. Abbott to J. E. H., June 24, 1927; V. Whitlock, "Yellowhouse Canyon," Manuscript, 275-278; George A. Wallis, "Famous Cattle Ranches," *Progressive Farmer*, December, 1935, 41.

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A capital stock of \$100,000 was formed and was subscribed principally by these men. A short time later the American National Bank opened for business in the cool corner of the Driskill Hotel, where it prospered for twenty-one years. Thence it was moved into the Littlefield Building, constructed by the Major on Congress Avenue, and appropriately decorated with range murals and great bronze doors. The doors, beautifully embossed with his famous brands to suggest the origins of the bank, are the most artistically distinctive in the Southwest. They were modeled by H. Daniel Webster, in New York, and cast by Tiffany, while the six murals inside the lobby were painted by E. Martin Hennings.

After a short time the capital stock of the bank was doubled, and so rapid and prosperous was the growth of the bank that in 1913 its capitalization was raised to \$300,000. Meanwhile, the bank had been paying 20 per cent annual dividends to its stockholders. It was always under the Major's watchful eye and frugal care, and when the employees reported for work of a morning, they almost invariably found him there, sitting in his office at the rear before a desk piled high with papers which he kept pushing back from a tiny space immediately in front of him—a space just large enough for the signing of his name to a letter or a check. He needed no room for the figuring of a man's financial statement or responsibility, the proper size of a loan, or the amount of interest it would return. He did all of that in his head.

For years he sat and worked there, walking briskly to his work each morning, shadowed by old Nath, his faithful body-servant, who, built much on the same stocky order and wearing his master's secondhand clothes, patterned his every movement after the Major, so that anyone viewing the



*The great bronze doors*

- H.B. Bugbee -

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two from the rear, without benefit of the distinction of color, might have taken them for brothers. Nath drove his buggy team when the master wanted to ride, and as for the use of cars, the President of the bank did not get one until after most of his subordinates had bought, a procedure which was entirely in keeping with his character.

He shifted much of the detail to his assistants, especially to a nephew by marriage, H. A. Wroe, who came into the bank in 1903 and soon became a substantial stockholder. In time, Wroe became president, while the Major, as chairman of the board, sat, easily approachable, still in his office at the rear—still a ruddy, vigorous type whose movements suggested primarily a man of the range instead of the office. Visitors, business or otherwise, known or unknown, walked in at the open door without ceremony. The suggestion of a southern background, a story of the Confederacy, or an interest in its past, quickly claimed the Major's attention, and, after hoisting one leg over the arm of his low, massive chair, he was ready to engage at any length in the subject nearest to his heart.

His greatest business bother during these years, some think, was the prosperity of his rival in finance, the Austin National Bank. It, too, was established in 1890, and it not only did well, but—and this was particularly damaging in the eyes of the Major—it was organized and headed by a Pennsylvania Yankee, Dr. E. P. Wilmot. Littlefield did all his business through the Commerce Trust, of Kansas City, and when he anticipated a call for a statement from his own bank, he would have a big transfer made from the Kansas City institution, it is said, so that his statements would show up larger than Wilmot's.

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He backed his friends, and especially his family, generously, carrying them at times for fantastic credits and paying thousands of dollars upon their personal accounts, but he made it a practice never to endorse a piece of paper, never asked anyone to endorse his, always made his own notes payable "on or before," and, having learned all about the steady drain of interest, usually paid them off "before." He made money handsomely at banking,<sup>11</sup> but he made more in cattle and in land, and, primarily, his bank was an operating base for larger enterprises and more intriguing pursuits.

Frequently he kept from \$800,000 to \$1,000,000 in his personal account, and instead of having special accounts for his farms and ranches, he had his foremen write checks directly on him. Regularly he had them come to Austin, usually on Sunday, to meet him at the bank, where, after briskly pacing down from the angular, turreted red home he had built on the slope on the north side of town, he took the checks in hand and went over the ranch accounts in detail. He had the peculiar and penetrating habit of apparently never batting an eyelid as long as he was engrossed in a subject with another, and his blue-gray eyes seemed to bore to the depths of an applicant's responsibility when one appeared at the bar for financial advice. He went over every expenditure in detail, and when his foremen left they knew that he knew everything that had been going on.

<sup>11</sup> Littlefield, "Autobiographical Sketch," 16-17; *The American National Bank, 1890-1934*, broadside, *The Austin American*, November 10, 1939; *San Antonio Express*, June 4, 1916; T. U. Taylor, "Major George W. Littlefield," *Frontier Times*, September, 1936, 5; Daniell, *Men of Texas*, 352; Hardy and Roberts, as cited, II, 892; H. A. Wroe to J. E. H., January 8, 1938; Ike T. Pryor to J. E. H., March 27, 1937; T. H. Bowman to J. E. H., January 8-9, 1938.

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The same solicitous care was extended to the affairs of those who, in his patriarchal way, he felt should be dependent upon him. One more illustration should suffice. When Shelton Dowell, his nephew, died in his prime, Littlefield became self-appointed trustee of his small family estate and guarantor of its future. He wrote off as his own losses debts that Dowell owed him, and since he had trouble keeping Mrs. Dowell's insurance money lent out at 12 per cent, he made the White boys use it in the operation of the Littlefield Cattle Company and pay her 10 per cent. In investing a portion of her money in a note, he apologized to her for the fact that it only bore 9 per cent, but advised her wisely, after the fashion of a fond uncle and a judicious banker: "I think so far as loaning the money is concerned that when you Know you are getting good paper, then you better not hold for to high interest—Security is the main object—" <sup>12</sup> And as for security, he knew the Littlefield Cattle Company had it, and then too he was putting the money "where every thing is under my controle." And for her personal needs, he reassured her with what became a general refrain in his scrawling, handwritten letters: "If you want any money let me Know at any time—" <sup>13</sup>

His bank naturally became the fountain head of his "investments" in and his gratuities to his family, scattered far and wide. His dear kindred could count on him for every need. He put them through school in youth, promoted them in business in maturity, backed them in adversity, wrote off their losses, plied them with patient advice, and backed them

<sup>12</sup> Littlefield to Mrs. Lizzie H. Dowell, February 2, 1886; the same, June 19, 1886, Dowell Papers.

<sup>13</sup> Littlefield to Mrs. Lizzie H. Dowell, June 24, 1886.

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again. He built homes for his nieces, but was never an advocate of women in business. As Will White once said:

"He was my benefactor, but the hardest taskmaster I ever saw. He wanted you to do your best all the time. But his attitude was different toward the girls. He never wanted the boys to stop and he never wanted the girls to start."

Adviser, taskmaster, financier, trustee, and friend—in every capacity he served long and well those bound to him by ties of blood or of southern sympathy.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### ON THE FRINGES OF POLITICS

LITTLEFIELD came from the southern plantation life that was almost as close to the field of politics as to a patch of cotton. He came of a background where there was time for participation in public affairs, and of a party that was then rooted in the independent rural life of America, instead of being ruled by the machines and subsidized votes of the cities. He was a Democrat in the old-time meaning of the word, though the liberals of his day branded him as a radical, and the radicals of today would have damned him as a reactionary. All of which may mean that he was a man of practical methods and sound common sense.

Thomas Jefferson and the Democratic party were vibrant living forces for him; "states' rights" was not an empty shibboleth, but an ideal that he would fight and die for. He believed in the convention system; the idea of a man's choosing himself to run for office was repugnant to him. He was opposed to the Terrell Election Law, the direct election of senators, and to the prohibition amendment, though he drank but little himself. With a conspicuous lack of sentimental idealism, he was confident that woman suffrage would neither clean up politics nor even advance the estate

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of women, and he opposed it—as he opposed most of the other “reforms” of his day—sometimes with the effective tactics that women with a flair for political instead of domestic housecleaning were pledged to purge.

It is idle, though interesting, to speculate upon what might have been; but it seems only fair and just to appraise the practical views of men in relation to their environment. Whatever high idealism might have been carried over from Littlefield’s past into the field of politics was effectively ground out of his system by the tragic era of Reconstruction. During those hard years, he saw his own lovely and productive land, for which he had suffered and served, fall under the complete dominion of carpetbag leaders radically bent upon the exploitation of his traditions and his substance. At the time, he realized the tragic implications of the radical trend, but he kept his counsel and nurtured his wrath; and it may be that he then became convinced of the efficacy, and even the righteousness, of practical politics. As for the war, the wounds healed up, but the righteous wrath over the rape of his land burned hot in his heart until the last and found partial but effective expression in his calculated devotion to politics.

In politics, as in business, he was a practical man, and he never attempted to stop any storms until he had something besides talk to throw in their way. His interest in the welfare of John H. Reagan—Texas’ contribution to the Confederate Cabinet—was deep and genuine, and the reverence in which he held “Uncle Johnnie,” as he called Reagan, is attested by the monument he left to his memory. He took much interest in the Sul Ross campaign for governor, and when Attorney General Hogg came out for governor, Littlefield, unlike



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*George W. Littlefield, Southerner*

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most big cowmen of the time, supported him with his time and money. When Hogg made a speaking trip to Gonzales, Littlefield rallied the home folks and came down on the train with the candidate.

As that hot and historic campaign waxed warmer, everybody's blood pressure went up, the Major's included. One morning about six, when old Nath brought the paper to his bed, as was his custom, he read the statement that two men had come into the Driskill Hotel wanting to bet \$25,000 that Clark would be the next governor of Texas. He kicked off the covers, strode to the phone, and asked Joe Nalle if he would join him in running an advertisement in *The Statesman* offering a reward of \$2,500 to anyone who would produce the men who would bet \$25,000 that Clark would be elected. They composed the advertisement, got out thousands of circulars, and not only blanketed the town with them, but had all the hotel guests interviewed in an attempt to find the prospective betters.<sup>1</sup>

Although the office of governor claimed a greater interest, he never forgot that the local offices were of great importance, and he invested heavily of his time, his influence, and his money in them. When Warren W. Moore ran for district attorney of Travis County, he put up \$1,500 to help him make the race. At one time, the story goes, he paid poll taxes for 1,400 negroes, and when he was investigated for illegal influence of an election in which Gus Wroe was a candidate for city treasurer, he readily admitted:

“Why yes, I paid their poll taxes but I didn't tell them

<sup>1</sup> S. E. Cole, of Goliad, who married one of the Major's nieces, remembers the amount proposed by the alleged gamblers as \$50,000. S. E. Cole to J. E. H., January 22, 1939; T. U. Taylor to J. E. H., January 5, 1938; *Frontier Times*, September, 1936, 576.

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how to vote. Of course I hoped they'd vote for my candidate."

The story most often told, however, was that of the colorful campaign of his friend, John D. McCall, former state comptroller, against John L. Peeler for the mayoralty of Austin. The voting was on when someone walked in to tell the Major that McCall was getting beat. According to the legend, he grabbed up five hundred silver dollars and, with old Nath driving his buggy, went tearing out to Wellmer's Store in the old Seventh Ward, the Negro section in East Austin. There the Negroes had waited until late for a beneficent political system to manifest itself, and though they wanted three dollars a vote, the Major was an economical man and a dollar was his limit. Furthermore, he was too practical to pay until the voting was done, and posting himself outside the polls, but in view of one of the election judges who gave him "the high sign" when a Negro had voted right, he handed out silver dollars after the voters had done their duty. In justice to the advocates of the fifteenth amendment, it should here be recorded that most of the Negroes voted "right," and Littlefield's friend was elected.

According to one account, Clarence Miller, manager of the Peeler campaign, who was also concentrating on that box, protested to Littlefield at the time:

"Major, it's against the law to use money to influence an election." To which the Major replied:

"I'm not using money to influence an election. I'm going to vote for McCall, but I'm not telling these boys how to vote."

Old Nath told the Major's nephew, George Littlefield, who was staying at Littlefield's home in the middle nineties

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while attending the University of Texas, that a policeman tried to stop "Marse George," but with no greater success than Miller had had.

"Why Major Littlefield, you ought not to be doing this," the officer warned. "We might have to arrest you." But the Major impatiently shook him off, saying:

"I don't have time to see you, now. Come around tomorrow and we'll talk it over."

Finally Littlefield and R. L. Batts became rivals for the control of Austin. Both were resolute men of great personal drive and power—Batts an ardent "pro" and Littlefield a strong "anti." According to the legends, Batts accused the Major of buying an election, and, being a forthright, honest man, the Major replied:

"Yes, I bought it, and the only reason that so and so didn't was because he didn't have the money. I did."<sup>2</sup>

Thus Littlefield was, as his one-time friend Jim Ferguson put it, "the most vicious opponent a man could have. But if he was your friend he put his money on you. He'd go the limit." At times he was vindictive; he never forgot; but it is not of record that he promoted his own fortune through politics or cared more for the influence he wielded with the great than the good he might do for the lowly. Illustrative of this is the story of Fayette Grissom, a warlike son of old Gonzales.

Littlefield had served with Grissom's father in the Confederate Army, had known him as a boy in Gonzales, and had worked him on the cattle trail. There is a suggestion

<sup>2</sup> James E Ferguson to J. E. H., January 6, 1938; T. U. Taylor to J. E. H., January 6, 1938; George Littlefield to J. E. H., March 4, 1937; John W. Brady to J. E. H., January 7, 1938.

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that Grissom had defended the Major's life at one time, but however that may be, it is a fact that he was a man of nerve who was born for trouble. In a row at Houston he killed a certain Dr. Brown, and was sent to the penitentiary for life. Littlefield came to his aid, but tried in vain to secure his pardon. When Hogg was elected governor, Littlefield made the most of his influence, but his influence was not enough. And so, according to a widely told story—perhaps fanciful in origin—the Major finally got Hogg off on a fishing trip in the Gulf, and when he had him outside the "three mile zone," the legal limits of Texas, the lieutenant-governor, who automatically became acting governor, signed the pre-arranged pardon and set Fayette Grissom free. Hogg protested mightily to Littlefield, but Grissom made his way back to Gonzales and became a deputy under Marshall "Boss" Cole, where he served well until John Wesley Hardin came along. Grissom and Hardin had fallen out while serving together in the penitentiary at Huntsville, and John Wesley told him, as he walked out of the gates:

"The first thing I do when I get out will be to kill you."

So it looked like trouble when Hardin later hung out his shingle as a lawyer in the town where Grissom was a deputy. In order not to embarrass "Boss" Cole, for Grissom had no fear himself, he suggested that he hand in his resignation and leave Gonzales peacefully behind. Cole agreed and Grissom resigned, but before he left town he came back to tell Cole about a man at Hallettsville that he surely wanted to kill before he left for good. The Marshall managed to persuade him that he had killed enough already, and so Grissom left for the LFD ranch, where he punched cows for several years. At last, stricken with paralysis, he returned

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to a sister at Flatonia, to whom Littlefield sent twenty-five dollars monthly until Grissom died.<sup>3</sup> Charlie Walker, of the LFDs, still cherishes Grissom's old sixshooter, with its mellow ivory grips, that Grissom had bought to use for killing Hardin—the last enduring memento of the most persistent story about Littlefield's use of political influence in Texas.

In addition to his affection for the Confederacy and all that pertained to the South, Littlefield had a genuine interest in education from early manhood. In 1868 while frugally farming on the Guadalupe, he, as a young man of twenty-five, was financing a grown nephew, John Dowell, through college in the East. Throughout his life he subsidized the education of his kin and others in whom he was interested. Undoubtedly this interest in education was stimulated by his moving to Austin, where shortly the University of Texas was opened, and, through the years, as he daily crossed the "Forty Acres" at a running-walk, he must have cast a speculative eye at the University's awkwardly growing structures, and wondered briefly what went on within their walls. With the confident faith of one who had never been there, however, he was willing to concede that what went on was good, and he was ever ready to supply the money to his relatives who were anxious to try it out themselves.

At least this disinterested faith was evident until, in the late eighties, the University became the recipient of a benefaction from a banker of San Antonio who had left Texas

<sup>3</sup> Charles W. and Walter Walker to J. E. H., August 5, 1937; S. E. Cole, as cited; R. O. Daniel to J. E. H., January 29, 1940. This story can be checked in substance, except for the fishing maneuver, by the official record. Littlefield moved for the pardon, and it was issued by the lieutenant governor during Hogg's absence. See applications for Pardon No. 15,573, in behalf of W. L. [Lafayette] Grissom, Texas State Library; also *The Austin Statesman*, December 28, 1892, for the absence of Hogg.

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during the Civil War to avoid joining the Confederacy and now perpetuated his name upon the campus of a great southern state university by donating the first dormitory for men, called Brackenridge Hall.

It is hardly too much to say, perhaps, that Littlefield's dislike for George W. Brackenridge became an influence for positive good. To the Major, in the first place, lack of loyalty to the South by those who lived there provoked the utmost contempt. In the second, it must have seemed to him the height of effrontery for a man who had not supported the South in her time of trouble to return to profit from her in times of peace.<sup>4</sup> Out of this peculiarly human situation there developed an antipathy on Littlefield's part that flowered into a genuine interest in and a broad philanthropy toward the University of Texas. Perhaps he fumed in his office and bowed his neck, as he sat at his desk beneath the large mural of a Hereford bull called the "Pride of the Herd," and made up his mind that no "damned Yankee," much less one who left Texas between suns on a good black horse, could appropriate the school under his very nose.

Robert E. Vinson, once President of the University of Texas, has left some vivid recollections of these virile characters. He wrote:

. . . Both were strong men, self-reliant, capable. Both grew up with the state of Texas, had far-sighted vision of and confidence in its progress and profited,

<sup>4</sup> See Basil Young Neal, "George W. Brackenridge: Citizen and Philanthropist," 1929, thesis at the University of Texas, 4-12, and 14. Brackenridge was first appointed to the Board of Regents by Governor Ireland, November 27, 1886. *Ibid.*, 84. Brackenridge insisted, however, upon calling the dormitory University Hall.

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materially, to an unusual degree from their shrewd judgments of its values. They were exact opposites . . . their dislike of each other was profound. . . . Each of them seemed to regard the other as the representative, if not the embodiment, of the principles which had once driven the nation asunder. . . . It was not easy to know these men. They did not wear their hearts upon their sleeves. On the contrary, as seems to be the case with so many successful men, they surrounded themselves with protective devices, defense mechanisms, of various sorts, which tended to ward off all but the most persistent, and, in consequence, they acquired a general reputation of being lacking in the finer and more agreeable qualities. But this was not the case. Once their defenses were penetrated one found in both of them a wealth of sentiment and richness of personality more than sufficient to compensate for the efforts expended in their discovery.

It fell to my fortunate lot to know them both well. I have said they were opposites. One was primarily a man of thought, the other a man of action. One always wanted to know the explanation and meaning of things, the other the best method to do things. Mr. Brackenridge was by instinct a scholar. His mental companions were Charles Darwin, Alfred Russel Wallace, Thomas Henry Huxley, Herbert Spencer, John Tyndall, and curiously enough Isaiah and Paul. He kept their writings by his bed and on his table. He read them and as he used to say "quarreled with them" every day. Any extended conversation with him would always arrive, sooner or later at cosmogony, the origin and evolution of life and its destiny. This was the circle of his thoughts. In his later years he impressed me as laboring under a feeling of disappointment, if not frustration, as though life had played a trick upon him and had by some

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means kept him from the fulfillment of his most cherished desires. He was a good business man, but business was a side issue with him, apart from the world in which he really lived. And so he became an inglorious, if not altogether mute, Herbert Spencer. Major Littlefield, on the other hand lived and died in the world and in the work that he loved. The men who were Mr. Brackenridge's familiars were but names to Major Littlefield, if that. He is rather to be classed with men who carve empires out of the wilderness, who make the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose, who push against the horizon. Like the chief figure in *De Senectute* he was busy to the last, always conscious of the generations pressing up behind him, for whom he was making preparation. When Mr. Brackenridge spoke of the University of Texas he always emphasized the word University. Major Littlefield emphasized the word Texas. One was primarily concerned with the policies of the institution, the other with the people whom it served. . . . The University was the one thing, the only interest, they had in common. But this mutual interest was so strong in each of them as to lead these two fundamentally antagonistic persons into a number of co-operative undertakings of which the University was the beneficiary.<sup>5</sup>

"Co-operative," yes, but never cordial. For Littlefield never forgot that, whereas he left Gonzales County to serve the South, Brackenridge, he believed, left Jackson County to serve himself. And yet it is not to be supposed that Brackenridge was lacking in gratitude, for, years later, he bequeathed a tract of land along the Colorado River in

<sup>5</sup> Robert E. Vinson, "The University Crossed the Bar," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, XLIII, 283-84.

the city of Austin to the University of Texas—the tract to which President Vinson intrepidly attempted to move the University—with the peculiar proviso in the title that if the land were not used by the University it should revert to the people of Jackson County.

Before the tract was used for anything it was conceived as a likely location for a fish hatchery, and the noted "Colonel Bill" Sterrett, of *The Dallas News*, once game commissioner for Texas, set out to convert it to this useful purpose. It seems that the University officials were willing, but the attorney general told him the title was not good for this purpose. Colonel Sterrett set out for San Antonio to induce Brackenridge to remove the legal obstruction, and, according to the story Sterrett told, this remarkable conversation took place:

"No," Brackenridge said to Sterrett's proposal to clear the title, "I'm getting old. When I do anything I'm through with it. I just want to let it lay." Then, in curiosity, "Colonel Bill" inquired:

"Major Brackenridge, whatever caused you to include a reversion clause in your deed?"

"Gratitude, I reckon," replied the studious philanthropist.

"How's that?" interrogated the reportorial Sterrett.

"Well, I lived in Jackson County when the war broke out. I was a Union man. At first, as the Confederates won their battles, the home folks hurrahed me about being a Yankee. Then, as the war progressed, people who had been my friends passed me by without speaking. Then I could hear them talking about me when I passed. At last, as the Confederates were losing, I got word that they were com-

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ing to hang me one night, and I left on a good dark horse, before dawn. I've always been grateful for the fact that they didn't, and I wanted to show it."<sup>6</sup>

It is not of record that the philosophical Sterrett steered the talk toward cosmogony, but it is obvious that Brackenridge wisely realized that his destiny lay across the Rio Grande during the Civil War, and that it was a great deal safer thereafter to quarrel with the philosophers than with the Texans. We may believe, however, that his emphasis upon the word "University" was indicative of his genuine devotion to the broad field of learning, even as we may be positive that Littlefield's emphasis on *Texas* truly indicated his great and primary fidelity to the interests and traditions of his own soil.

Yet Brackenridge was well into the University's life and affairs before Littlefield came to realize that it was an institution in which every Texan, and especially every deeply loyal Texan, should have some part. It was not until 1911, when O. B. Colquitt, coming up from service on the Texas Railroad Commission to the office of governor, appointed Littlefield to the Board of Regents of the University, that he actually became a part of the institution's history, though he had made some gifts years before.

Colquitt made the appointment without consulting the Major, and at the same time offered a place to George Clark, of Waco, though he had been a Hogg supporter when Clark ran for governor. Clark refused the appointment, and Littlefield came to the Governor's office and told Colquitt that while he would very much like to serve he would have to

<sup>6</sup>R. R. Smith to J. E. H., January 8, 1940. See the *Deed Records*, Travis County, Vol. 244, p. 77, for this particular deed.

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decline, as he could not serve with Brackenridge, whom the Governor had reappointed. Colquitt countered with the University's need for him, mentioned the fact that the institution had a great potential endowment in land from which it had been receiving little return,<sup>7</sup> and insisted that, as Littlefield was a cowman versed in the values of land, he wanted him on the board particularly for this reason.

Likewise Colquitt must have explained then, as he did later, that he did not want to reappoint Brackenridge, but that "the University bunch wanted him very much." Perhaps this raised the Major's temperature a little, and he must have reasoned that Texans should not surrender, even to a peaceful infiltration of Yankees, without a struggle, and he accepted the appointment. Alexander Terrell, according to Colquitt, was angry because he had not been chosen for a place on the board. He went off with his friend, Brackenridge, for a fishing trip on the coast, and after they had fished and philosophized for a week or so Brackenridge returned and resigned the regency, to Colquitt's gratitude and Littlefield's great satisfaction. In 1913, Will Hogg, dynamic son of Littlefield's old governor friend, was appointed to the board.<sup>8</sup>

On January 9, 1911, Littlefield assumed the responsibilities of a member of the Board of Regents of the University of Texas, along with W. H. Stark, Clarence Ousley, Alex Sanger, John H. Kirby, W. H. Burges, Fred W. Cook,

<sup>7</sup> This statement by Colquitt is hardly borne out by the facts. In 1911 the University had a return of \$134,505 from its grazing leases, and the amount increased but normally during Littlefield's service on the board. J. W. Calhoun to J. E. H., with copy of the Regents' Records, the University of Texas.

<sup>8</sup> O. B. Colquitt to J. E. H., January 18, 1938. Brackenridge resigned January 25, 1911. Neal, "George W. Brackenridge," 84.

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and George W. Brackenridge, who was then still listed as a member but was absent from the first meeting. In time, he became chairman of the land committee of the board, as Colquitt had hoped he would, and in 1913, on the passage of a constitutional amendment changing the term of the board members, drew a six-year term. In April, 1916, Littlefield was able to report that the University had 2,067,105 acres of grazing land leased, for which it would receive, that year, \$175,983.06—"which will be the largest income these lands ever yielded."<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile, a strong figure had stalked out of Bell County to take the political stage, and to write his colorful imprint upon the history of Texas.

When James E. Ferguson first came to speak at Austin in 1914, Littlefield had already made up his mind to support him. The word had gone out to the effect that here was something unique in Texas politics, and a great crowd of tenant farmers and hill-billies had come in to hear Ferguson expound his views and pronounce his "agins"; for truly, to hear him tell it, he was "agin high taxes and agin high rents," and "agin" a lot of other things. A tabernacle that had been used for preaching had been engaged for his initial appearance in Austin. When the great crowd was gathered and the collars began wilting, down the aisle came Major George W. Littlefield with an oak bucket and an old gourd dipper, and dressed, as Ferguson still vividly recalls, in a plaid hickory shirt, a red handkerchief around his neck, and a pair of old blue jeans held up by big suspenders.

"He was a real politician," Ferguson admiringly recalled. The future Governor quickly caught the cue and jumped

<sup>9</sup> Minutes, Board of Regents, the University of Texas, D, 81, 323, 570.

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up to drink from the gourd while the richest man in Austin, "dressed worse than the poorest one there, held the bucket." Next day Ferguson went by Littlefield's bank to visit; the Major followed him to the door as he left, and then came running out as he got in his hack, saying:

"I almost forgot something. Stick this in your pocket and look at it when you get on the train."

"I did," said Ferguson reminiscently. "He had given me a thousand dollars in the long green."

Again during the campaign Littlefield went to Taylor to hear Ferguson speak. That day Ferguson dwelt feelingly upon "the lost cause and the battle for states' rights," and after the talk Littlefield gave him another thousand. Ferguson's campaign against Tom Ball grew, and someone tried to hurrah Littlefield about his candidate and his chances of election. Littlefield harbored a strong aversion toward gambling—he never gambled nor would he lend money to anyone who did. But for a man to challenge his judgment and his candidate, now, that was another matter, and addressing the supporter of Ball, he crisply said:

"Well, money talks," and he walked into the cage and brought out five thousand dollars in bills. The bet was called, and then Littlefield really got busy, writing letters to his friends and relatives to get out and do everything they could to win the election. Ferguson himself recalls that: "He would bet all that anyone and everyone would put up against him on a cause that he was interested in, and then he'd get out and spend that much to get his party elected. He was the most vicious opponent a man could have."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> James E. Ferguson to J. E. H., January 6, 1938; S. E. Cole to J. E. H., January 22, 1939.

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This appraisal by Ferguson deserves consideration. Certainly Littlefield had been his supporter and friend, and at first glance it may seem strange that one who had stood by him so substantially and well should be recalled, after these many years, not in the positive terms of friendship, but, conversely, as a determined opponent. Perhaps unconsciously, but none the less significantly, this casual comment indicated the scars of battle in a clash of principles and personalities that have never quite healed, the story of which must follow in due course. By that time, however, Littlefield had passed from the fringes of politics and was in the midst of the fray.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### THE FERGUSON-UNIVERSITY FIGHT

AFTER a whirlwind campaign, Jim Ferguson was elected governor. This newcomer to Texas politics was the son of a preacher from Bell County, a colorful combination of vigor, astuteness, courage, and picturesque expression. And Major Littlefield, influential figure in the business life of Austin, regent of the University, and one of the richest men in Texas, was on his high-rolling band wagon. That Littlefield had any special cause to plead or favor to ask is not of record, but he felt that the time had come, in his now measured years, to exert the influence commensurate with his ability and his interests for what he considered the advancement of the welfare of Texas.

Ferguson immediately headed for his objective. He knew, instinctively, that the man who had massed the voters of a democracy by a moving emotional appeal was a man of power. From absolute political obscurity he had risen in one short campaign to the highest position in the state, and when he came into the governor's office it was with the confident stride of a man aware of the power of his personality, the force of his will, and the keenness of his mind.

Ferguson was inaugurated as governor, January 12, 1915, and shortly thereafter met Dr. W. J. Battle, acting president of the University, upon the subject of the budget. That

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year the party convention had asked for itemized budgets instead of lump sum appropriations, and Dr. Battle, quiet, cultivated gentleman and professor of classical languages, walked down from his tower in the old Main Building to meet this double-fisted fighter for fame and power from the world of affairs. Ferguson mentioned the party platform calling for itemized bills, and Battle assured him the University's budget would be itemized.

In fact, before Dr. Sidney E. Mezes had resigned the presidency and Dr. Battle had been made acting president, the Board of Regents had adopted and submitted an itemized budget with a proviso allowing such changes and substitutions within the total as the regents might find necessary. The legislature passed the appropriations bill with this proviso and sent it to the Governor. Dr. Battle and Professor C. S. Potts, of the law department, called on the Governor and asked him to approve it in full in order not to throw their plans out of balance. But the Governor wished to discuss the bill, and out of that discussion grew Ferguson's charge that University officials were evading the request for honest itemization in asking for funds for professorships not even in existence.<sup>1</sup>

Ferguson affected great moral indignation at this evasion—as he chose to consider it—drew an analogy between such action and the “padding of the pay roll” by an Irish section foreman, and later coined his catch phrase, “carrying dead men on the pay roll.” He approved the bill, however, then

<sup>1</sup> James E. Ferguson to J. F. H., January 23, 1939; see *Bulletin of the University of Texas*, 1916, No. 59, entitled “Investigation by the Board of Regents of the University of Texas Concerning the Conduct of Certain Members of the Faculty,” and hereafter referred to as “Investigation by the Board.”

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wrote the chairman of the Board of Regents and questioned the wisdom of the administration of the University in many details, ranging from the extension department to the office of "Secretary to the University."<sup>2</sup> That some of his criticism was not inappropriate may be granted, but the action raised an issue that transcended the importance of the mal-administration of which he was critical, and that issue was direct political interference in the administrative details and policies of an educational institution that supposedly had been free from political domination.

Ferguson's suggestions for the improvement of the University did not result in changes that he apparently expected, but late in July Dr. Battle asked the attorney general for an interpretation of the special proviso as to changes and substitutions. The attorney general gave a favorable interpretation, and when Ferguson read it in the papers his temperature mounted, just as everybody else seemed to settle into the general lethargy of an Austin summer.<sup>3</sup> For Ferguson wanted no short-circuiting of the executive power, even by an appeal to a constitutional agency. He made up his mind that Battle must go.

On August 18, 1915, Ferguson wrote the regents "and gave to the press of the state, a violent letter denouncing President Battle as guilty of 'sharp practice in a most culpable degree.'" Not wishing to involve the University in an unseemly public controversy, Dr. Battle refrained from answering the attack on his integrity, but at the meeting of the Board of Regents, September 11, made answer to the Governor's major charges as carried in the newspapers.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> June 11, 1915. "Investigation by the Board," 22-24.

<sup>3</sup> "Investigation by the Board," 24-25.   <sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 158-60.

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The board refused to remove Dr. Battle, but in October, realizing the danger to the University from a hostile Governor, Dr. Battle asked the board not to consider him for the presidency, hoping thereby to resolve the nasty issue. The auditor of the University had recently died, and at this same meeting of the board, W. R. Long, a Ferguson supporter previously known in politics, was chosen as auditor for the University to meet the Governor's demands for someone "not heretofore affiliated with the University in any way."<sup>5</sup>

A new president was not chosen for several months, but while the Board of Regents was looking for one Ferguson was doing some prospecting himself. According to his own story, he approached T. W. Gregory and suggested R. L. Batts for the presidency. Gregory was Woodrow Wilson's Attorney General of the United States, a former regent, and a long time friend of the University. Batts, then living in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was counsel for the Gulf Oil Corporation. Gregory knew that Batts was deeply interested in the University, but said he did not think Batts could afford to accept the presidency because the salary was so small. Ferguson assured him that this could be remedied and returned from Washington, where he had conferred with Gregory, hopeful of getting Batts for the job. In April, 1916, however, the regents, without consulting the Governor, elected an eloquent Presbyterian minister, Robert E. Vinson. Ferguson made no effort to conceal his irritation. The feeling between the University and the Governor, instead of being eased by the selection of a new president, was

<sup>5</sup> [E. C. Barker], *Ferguson's War on the University of Texas*, published anonymously by Will Hogg in 1917 for distribution to the legislature and the people, at the time of Ferguson's impeachment. See pp. 5-8.

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fanned to a greater heat, and the controversy moved into its second and more serious stage.

Littlefield, a Ferguson patron, had helped in the selection of Vinson, and shortly before the new president took office he and the Major called on the Governor, at the capitol. The Governor, who had been inquiring into the affairs of the University, then and there demanded the discharge of six members of the faculty, namely: W. J. Battle, C. S. Potts, John A. Lomax, W. T. Mather, A. Caswell Ellis, and R. E. Cofer. Yet he refused to make any charge against them.

From June until October, 1916, the fire smouldered, except when fanned to life by an exchange of letters between Vinson and Ferguson.<sup>6</sup> By fall, Ferguson was pushing the fight, and at the meeting of the Board of Regents on October 10, 1916, Littlefield and the other regents investigated "the conduct" of those faculty members whose dismissal Ferguson demanded. At that stormy meeting Will C. Hogg was in the chair, Fred C. Cook, chairman of the board, being absent on account of illness. Around the table were regents George W. Littlefield, George S. McReynolds, A. W. Fly, David Harrell, M. Faber, S. J. Jones, and the new president of the University. Ferguson and Walter Caldwell, his attorney, were in attendance.

The reasonable position of the board that cause for dismissal must be shown made little impression on Ferguson at first, but the firm position of Hogg and Harrell finally drove the issue home, and, taking the floor for a long morning session, the Governor explained his bill of particulars. In the cool light of retrospection, it is hard to realize the intensity

<sup>6</sup> Ferguson to J. E. H., as cited; E. C. Barker, *Ferguson's War*, 6-8; "Investigation by the Board," 5-7.

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of his feeling. An insight, however, can be gained from the record of that memorable conference, as Ferguson took the floor:

"I am looked upon by certain members of this Board as a gratuitous intermeddler," he began, and though

members of this Board have . . . even denied the legal right of the Governor of this State to interfere in any way with the management of this University . . . I take all that as of no account and I care nothing for it because I owe my allegiance only to the people of Texas and the constitutional obligations and powers that rest on me to see that every nickel of the money that the University has is spent like the people intended it to be spent.

This appearance [before this Board] is considered a piece of effrontery, and growth of that sentiment . . . of defiance to the laws of the country and the people of the State . . . has reached such a degree in the State University that it involves the very life of the University . . . I am not here because this or that professor may have been guilty of that little indiscretion or that irregularity but because of the prevalence of this spirit to defy the will of the people . . . the people have put the authority in certain hands, and whether it is wise or unwise, this Board will have no right to inquire, and they have no right to defy it and they have no right to arouse antagonism against duly constituted authority.<sup>7</sup>

The Governor proceeded then to a statement of his particular annoyance with the objectionable members of the University staff. There was A. Caswell Ellis, encouraging

<sup>7</sup> "Investigation by the Board," 18-19. Notice of the meeting is made in the Minutes, Vol. E, p. 1, Board of Regents, University of Texas.

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profligacy in expenditure by saying that the extension department "had plenty of money"; there was John A. Lomax, in the still unestablished field of public relations, listed as "Secretary to the University," with duties, Ferguson charged, "confined to visiting the alumni." He pointedly commented that "The State of Texas, having given the young man or the young lady an education free of charge ought to expect loyalty and co-operation without the necessity of having a paid agent to keep enthusiasm aroused." Then there was Pat Lochridge, business manager, charged with turning in an expense account for seeing a football game at Dallas; and in particular there was his political enemy, W. H. Mayes—of the School of Journalism—not only a professor, but, Ferguson charged, "the editor of the paper in Brownwood . . . drawing the State's pay to skin my back from one end of the State to the other."

There were others, but especially there was former Senator Cofer, a University professor who attended the last county political convention and helped send a delegation to the state convention "that absolutely refused to endorse the present administration . . . that won't even endorse the crowd that fed them. Then, by golly," the Governor swore, the University "is in politics and you can't get away with it. The issue is made . . . this thing can't continue. . . . We will face about and get together and remove from this institution the men who have brought all this criticism on you.

I told Dr. Vinson and Major Littlefield . . . that these men ought to be removed . . . Dr. Vinson . . . assumes and arrogates to himself absolute independence. The Governor of the State is amenable to the people and every man around this board is amenable

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to the executive head of this Government. . . . Now, gentlemen, . . . we just as well understand each other and I will tell you now, if you undertake to put these men over me [retain them] I am going to exercise my constitutional authority to remove every member of this board that undertakes to vote to keep them. I say that in all due candor.<sup>8</sup>

Governor Ferguson urged immediate dismissal of the men without an investigation, and, as a parting shot, remarked: "You have expected me to be satisfied and you believed me checkmated, but the biggest fight is on you ever had if you undertake to put this thing over. . . . You keep that man Battle here and you lay a precedent that tells every Governor for forty years they have got no right to do as they want to—that is the issue that is raised." That truly was the issue! Will Hogg declared:

"I for one would rather go to hell in a hand basket myself than so act, without any investigation into the charges."<sup>9</sup>

And to prove that Ferguson was not speaking idle words when he threatened "to remove every member of this board" who did not bend to his will, it should be noted that he had, a month earlier, written Rabbi M. Faber, of Tyler:

Unless I may be assured of your full and complete co-operation, I will much appreciate your sending to me at once your resignation as a member of the Board of Regents under my appointment. You can rest assured that I have nothing against you personally, but the time has come when I must know who is for me and who is against me.

<sup>8</sup> "Investigation by the Board," 23-46, 144-54.

<sup>9</sup> "Investigation by the Board," 46-53; John A. Lomax, "Will Hogg, Texan," in *The Atlantic*, May, 1940, p. 665.

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Faber replied with a firm refusal, and Ferguson answered that he did not care to "bandy words," but would take steps to remove Faber if he did not vote with him. The same correspondence, with the same result, took place with Dr. S. J. Jones, another of his appointees.<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, the board had heard Ferguson's charges against the offensive faculty members, "which involved political activity, peculation, fraud, and outright theft." He had demanded their dismissal without a hearing or a chance for them to defend themselves. But the board heard the men and acquitted them.

Nearly six weeks later, November 21, 1916, Dr. Faber resigned from the board, and in an interview, published in *The Dallas News*, "explained that the crisis in the affairs of the University was passed and he was no longer needed." Then he added the real reason by saying that "as it is distasteful to anyone to serve where he is persona non grata, I tendered my resignation." Ferguson then appointed W. R. Brents, who was confirmed but who utterly failed, in the struggles to come, to "co-operate" with the Governor. Evidently Major Littlefield's "co-operation" seemed to the Governor assured.

In his message to the legislature, January 10, 1917, Ferguson, in for his second term, continued the attack by insinuating that the University was autocratic and unfriendly to the common schools:

As long as higher education remains democratic [he said] . . . then I am for higher education. But when higher education becomes either autocratic or aristocratic in its ways or customs and begins to

<sup>10</sup> E. C. Barker, *Ferguson's War*, 7-8.

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arrogate to itself an unwarranted superiority over the great masses of the people who make higher education possible, and wants to rule with a college diploma alone, then I am against higher education and I consider it 'book learnin' gone to seed.

To remedy such a system, he appointed W. P. Allen, J. W. Butler, and Dr. D. H. Lawrence as regents, to take the places of Hogg, Sanger, and Harrell, whose terms had expired. Senator Walter D. Caldwell, the Governor's mouth-piece, predicted that they would be confirmed without a contest in the Senate, but as to what they were going to do with the University, he "could not even hazard a guess." But his assurance of confirmation was slightly premature.

For, in the meantime, the central committee of the Ex-Students' Association had been organized, which, in itself, was one of the most remarkable vigilance committees in any academic history.<sup>11</sup> It consisted of thirty-one members scattered throughout Texas, and sprang from the spontaneous anxiety of capable, substantial, and zealous Texans for the welfare of their state University. It was headed by John W. Brady, able and fluent lawyer of Austin, and by that genial, charming gentleman, Dudley K. Woodward, likewise a lawyer of Austin, who served as its executive secretary. The battle drew to a focus across his desk top, and from this time until the fight was won the defense of the University lay in the lap of this committee.<sup>12</sup>

Before the new regents were confirmed the central committee petitioned the legislature for "a sufficient investiga-

<sup>11</sup> Barker, *Ferguson's War on the University*, 10-13; *The Dallas News*, January 27, 1917.

<sup>12</sup> D. K. Woodward to J. E. H., January 7 and 14, 1939; John W. Brady to J. E. H., January 7, 1939; Barker, *Ferguson's War*, 10-13.

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tion . . . to remove from the University any suspicion or distrust that may have been aroused by the recent controversy." A resolution was introduced into the Senate for an investigation of the Governor's nominees for regents; another was proposed for investigation of the Governor himself.

Considerable legislative maneuvering followed, and, as impeachment was implied and the Senate was without jurisdiction, the battleground shifted to the House of Representatives, where a committee was appointed to inquire into the Governor's acts.<sup>13</sup> On March 15, the House committee reported, finding the Governor's conduct "deserving the severest criticism and condemnation," but holding that he did not, nevertheless, "merit the severe pains and penalties of impeachment."<sup>14</sup> The press viewed the report as an "exoneration," but with reservations, and while accepting the committee's report, the House refused to order the record of its investigation printed.

A few days later the Senate refused to confirm Dr. D. H. Lawrence, one of Ferguson's appointees, but approved J. W. Butler, W. P. Allen, and C. E. Kelly for the board.<sup>15</sup> The uneasy peace that is sometimes a prelude to impending disaster lasted about a month.

In the meantime, the Governor was brewing his medicine. Six members of the board of nine were his own ap-

<sup>13</sup> The House and Senate *Journals* carry the outline of this fight, the newspapers much of the detail, and Dr. Barker's chronological catalogue, *Ferguson's War on the University of Texas*, all of the essential facts—particularly pp. 10-18. *The Dallas News* carried complete accounts of the controversy. See issues of February 9 and 11 for this stage of the fight, and March 12-16 for the House committee's investigation.

<sup>14</sup> *The Dallas News*, March 16, 1917.

<sup>15</sup> *The Dallas News*, March 20, 1917.

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pointees, and Major Littlefield and Dr. Fly had supported him in the past. Apparently he was in control,<sup>16</sup> and late in May the Governor himself issued a call for a meeting of the Board of Regents at the Governor's office on the twenty-seventh, with the notice that the matter to be considered was "one of utmost and grave importance." The board professed ignorance of the intent of the meeting, but Chairman Wilbur Allen had dropped word that the dismissal of Vinson, Cofer, Mayes, Ellis, and Lomax would be demanded. Battle had accepted a professorship at the University of Cincinnati and was now out of the picture.

Vinson, who was naturally greatly disturbed, ran into Lomax, who was launching for a Saturday boat ride on Lake Austin, and informed him of the program. Lomax abandoned his excursion to confer with Dean H. Y. Benedict, and the two sought the sage counsel of R. L. Batts, now returned to Austin. They decided to have Lomax, who was public relations man for the University anyway, get in touch with the editors of the leading dailies of Texas and break on Sunday the news of what was going to happen in the Governor's office on Monday.<sup>17</sup> At the same time a parade of protest by University students was projected, to be led by George E. B. Pddy, late student at the University of Texas and then an army officer in training at Leon Springs.<sup>18</sup>

After the news reached Vinson, he called Chairman Allen, who verified the nature of the meeting and added that not only the offending faculty members but also the undemocratic "frats" were to be purged, and that if the

<sup>16</sup> *The Dallas News*, January 27, 1917.

<sup>17</sup> John A. Lomax to J. E. H., February 25, 1940; *Ferguson's War*, 17; *The Dallas News*, May 27, 1917.

<sup>18</sup> Lomax, as cited.

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gubernatorial demands were not met, the penalty to be imposed by the Governor would be the veto of "all appropriations for the University made by the last Legislature."<sup>19</sup>

The news broke on Sunday. The faculty met at the Y. M. C. A., with Benedict presiding, passed resolutions in support of Vinson, and agreed to "tender their services to the state without cost, if needed."

On Monday, by schedule, six members of the Board of Regents—Littlefield, Allen, Butler, Brents, McReynolds, and Fly—met in the high-ceilinged, dignified offices of the Governor of Texas to debate the academic fate of Vinson and the others. The Governor preferred no charges now against the faculty members, but claimed: that Vinson was a minister of the gospel, who, while working for the state had not ceased his ministerial activities, which was "contrary to the letter and spirit of the constitution" concerning the separation of church and state; that Vinson had been "wasteful and extravagant" in the use of traveling allowances; that he had mismanaged and bankrupted the Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary while serving as its president and therefore was incapable of managing the larger affairs of the University; and that he was affiliated with the Ex-Students' Association of the University, "and with other political enemies of the Governor" who were instrumental in bringing about the recent legislative investigation of the Governor.

All this, and more, the Governor was engaged in intoning to the assembled regents when pandemonium broke loose in the capitol. From the rotunda to the dome the build-

<sup>19</sup> *The Dallas News*, May 27, 1917.

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ing reverberated to the stirring refrain of "The eyes of Texas are upon you, all the live-long day," while a great mass of students, marching to the blasts of the University band, behind the uniformed figure of George Pddy, poured through the capitol. They streamed down Congress Avenue, turned, and came surging back to the capitol to pass in review immediately beneath the Governor's windows, where he and Regents Littlefield and Butler stood. Catching sight near a window of his friend and adviser, former Senator T. H. McGregor, the Governor snorted, according to a report in *The Dallas News*:

"Ain't this fine?" And the wily McGregor answered him with the suggestion "not to lose his head."

"Isn't this a fine insult to the Governor of Texas," Ferguson fumed to Littlefield and Butler, as the banners passed by.

"We are opposed to one-man rule," some banners read, while another declared: "Kaiserism is a menace abroad; and Kaiserism is a menace at home."

That afternoon the regents met at the University in an attempt to fix responsibility for what Butler termed a "hoodlum demonstration." They did not get far, but decided to meet in Galveston the succeeding week.

Meanwhile Ferguson grimly observed that: "If there is any power the Governor of Texas possesses that is unquestioned, it is his power of veto."<sup>20</sup> And the full force of Fergusons' threat lay in the fact that the generous appropriation bill for the next two years of the University's operations lay unsigned on his desk.

Each side girded itself for battle. The central committee

<sup>20</sup> *The Dallas News*, May 29 and 30, 1917; Lomax, as cited; Woodward, as cited.

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of the Ex-Students' Association set up headquarters with Brady and Woodward in charge. Will Hogg, now off the Board of Regents, moved into a corner of the Driskill Hotel, in Austin, which he did not leave for several weeks, and spread his powerful influence all over the state. He supplied the money for the fight, helped whip the organization into shape, and published the five hundred and fifty page "Record of Investigation . . . of Charges Filed Against Governor James E. Ferguson," that the legislature had made but had refused to print.

As the Governor conceived the issue, it was simply that the Governor through his own Board of Regents should run the University of Texas. Ferguson had promised Vinson "the biggest bear fight that was ever pulled off in Texas," if Vinson did not meet his demands. The University's defenders stood by their contention that the University "must be freed from partisan politics and one-man rule."<sup>21</sup>

On May 31, when the regents were to meet in Galveston, the newspapers announced the resignation of Regent J. W. Butler, apparently because he had been requested to vote for the removal of Vinson and had refused to do so. The same papers that announced Butler's resignation announced the appointment of J. M. Mathis. At the same time, Ferguson issued a proclamation removing Dr. S. J. Jones from the board, "because of lack of harmony with the administration," and the appointment of Dr. J. P. Tucker in his place.<sup>22</sup>

When the meeting opened at Galveston, Major Littlefield, though still supporting the Governor, was beginning

<sup>21</sup> John A. Lomax, as cited; D. K. Woodward, as cited; *The Dallas News*, June 27, 1917.

<sup>22</sup> *The Dallas News*, May 31, 1917; Minutes, Board of Regents, Vol. E, p. 43.

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to resent the Governor's attack. His position was an uncomfortable one. A man of stronger personal than institutional loyalties, he felt the average businessman's impatience with academic inhibitions against the dismissal of professors. And yet, this autocratic shuffling of a governing board to carry a point sat uneasily on his own strong stomach. He was in favor of dismissal but was beginning to sour on the method, and, humorously enough, his opposition now took a strongly legalistic turn.

With Ferguson dragooning his supporters and forcing the issue, the board met at the Galvez Hotel. Dr. Tucker, newly appointed, was present to be seated, and Mathis, as the spearhead of the Ferguson forces, urged his recognition. Littlefield objected upon the grounds that the legal requirements were not properly met. Mathis cited a law to cover the case, but Littlefield was not convinced. Then someone happily discovered that the secretary of state had failed to attach the seal of the state of Texas to Tucker's commission. That settled it. Littlefield was adamant; the commission was not in proper form. In all propriety, the board could not recognize the appointee. Then he elaborated:

"I am now and have always been a friend of Governor Ferguson's, but we all make mistakes. The Governor has made one in this case and I hope he recognizes it."

Then Regent Cook appealed to the constitution, but the fervid Fergusonites wanted immediate action. Mathis contended that Tucker should be seated by virtue of the Governor's signature, even though the seal was missing.

"Don't you know the Governor's signature, Major Littlefield?" pressed the peppery Dr. Fly. "Aren't you satisfied?"

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"There are certain legal forms that must be satisfied," the Major answered sternly. Brents came to his assistance with a constitutional appeal, and expressed his own doubts.

Then Mathis contended that they should consult a local lawyer for an opinion as to Dr. Tucker's legal status, and Vinson interposed to say that the attorney general of Texas was the legal adviser of the Board of Regents.

"I don't bank very strong on the opinion of the attorney general," Littlefield retorted, "but if he is the legal adviser of the board I suppose that we should get his opinion." Then they adjourned until next day, after having demonstrated, by arguments and test votes, that Ferguson was losing Littlefield's wholehearted support.<sup>23</sup>

The central committee of the Ex-Students' Association was busy. When the board met next day, June 1, 1917, it found a court order restraining Dr. Tucker from taking his place on the board upon a plea denying "the constitutional right of the governor to remove a member of the board without cause established by trial."

Also the regents found that Judge Ireland Graves had granted Brady and Woodward an injunction, in what came to be called the "Lomax Case," temporarily restraining the board from discharging the offensive faculty members. They also found that, overnight, Regent McReynolds had resigned, and that W. G. Love, a Houston lawyer, had been appointed in his place. Furthermore, Love was already on hand with his commission "duly sealed and attested," and the board, bound by its previous commitments on seals and signatures, was forced to seat him immediately.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> *The Dallas News*, June 1, 1917. Major Littlefield's motion to reject Tucker's commission was lost. See Minutes, Board of Regents, Vol E, p. 43.

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Woodward and Brady, representing the University, appeared and began reading a petition adopted by an Ex-Students' meeting in Austin two days before, praying forbearance by the board. Brady was barely started on the fluent document, however, when Mathis interrupted him to point out that their injunction barred the board anyway, and that there was no need of praying against the board's doing something it was already prohibited from doing. This argument seemed sound, and the petitioners agreed. But, fully aware that they were trying their case before the intensely interested people of Texas, as well as the Board of Regents, they had already handed their petition to the press.<sup>25</sup>

And so the board was halted by injunctive process, and the issue was spread before Texas. That night Governor Ferguson vetoed the appropriation. Years later, he denied that it was his original intention to hold the veto threat over the University as a coercive measure, but said that, in discussing the current stage of the "biggest bear fight in Texas" with Wilbur Allen, he had said that if such conditions continued at the University of Texas they would be sufficient cause for a veto. Allen, he said, carried the remark as a threat to Vinson, who also, in the language of Texas, "went off, half-cocked," accepted it as such, and issued a valiant defiance.<sup>26</sup>

In his message vetoing the \$1,640,000 appropriation measure, Ferguson naturally restated his case. He deplored the costs of "higher education," expressed his disapproval of President Vinson, cited irregularities in the financial admin-

<sup>24</sup> *The Dallas News*, June 1, 1917.

<sup>25</sup> *The Dallas News*, June 1, 1917.

<sup>26</sup> James E. Ferguson to J. E. H., January 23, 1939.

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istration of the University, and declared that the University faculty "should have new blood." Furthermore, the student body was undemocratically divided into two classes called fraternities and barbarians, with "the frats" living in "stately mansions" of luxury, while ridiculing the "soup-house barbs." And finally, he asserted that the "University bunch" began "its fight" on him because of his desire to support the common rural schools, and that, in truth, this was a battle between arrogant, "educated autocratic highbrows" desirous of maintaining an educational aristocracy and a great champion of the people who believed in "the education of the masses."<sup>27</sup>

Though the appeal was ingenious, the decision before the court of public opinion was uncertain, and both Ferguson and his friends on the board hoped for a compromise. He signed the veto but deferred filing it with the secretary of state, and until it was so filed the Governor's action was not official. Regent Mathis, his ardent supporter on the board, proposed a political trade-out. He "urged friends of the University to co-operate with him in choosing a great educator for President of the University, and in return for such co-operation he promised to use all his influence with the Governor to secure the withdrawal of the veto."<sup>28</sup> The last day for the filing of the veto was June 5, 1917, and all that day there were feverish conferences. Representatives of the board and the governor were trying to fight the issue out with the Ex-Students "behind closed doors." The regents proposed that the Lomax injunction be dismissed, "and that the present board proceed with a disposition of all Uni-

<sup>27</sup> *The Dallas News*, June 3, 1917; Barker, *Ferguson's War*, 22-25.

<sup>28</sup> Barker, *Ferguson's War*, 22-25; *The Dallas News*, June 3, 1917.

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versity affairs unhampered by court orders." Woodward and Brady countered with a proposal that "the entire controversy be left to the legislature for settlement, the Governor to convene a special session for that purpose only." But the legislature was hostile to the Governor, and Ferguson was not to be caught in that trap. The final effort at appeasement was made in a call by Major Littlefield, upon the insistence of Wilbur Allen, at Vinson's office.<sup>29</sup>

It was a tense, highly emotional, and unforgettable meeting. Littlefield and Allen represented Ferguson and the board, Brady and Woodward the Ex-Students, Vinson the administration of the University; and the sensitive John A. Lomax—for some unexplained reason the most objectionable of the offending faculty members—was there as an interested onlooker. Littlefield pointedly announced that if Vinson and Lomax would resign, Ferguson would allow a million dollars of the appropriation to stand, which thus reduced would have been more than the University had ever before received. The group turned to Vinson to hear him heatedly say:

"Major Littlefield, my answer to your proposition is this: 'the only way that you'll get me out of the presidency of the University is to plant your foot between my coattails and kick me out.'"<sup>30</sup>

Lomax, unnoticed until the question was put, likewise refused to resign. Asked then what he would do, were he in their places, Littlefield said he "would not resign."<sup>31</sup>

Allen urged their resignation, but John Brady came to

<sup>29</sup> *The Dallas News*, June 6, 1917; Littlefield's testimony in "John A. Lomax Injunction Suit," p. 200, Case No. 34, 789, Travis County, Texas.

<sup>30</sup> John W. Brady to J. E. H., January 7, 1938.

<sup>31</sup> "Lomax Injunction Suit," transcript of testimony, 206.

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Vinson's defense and climaxed a moving speech by pointing toward the venerable towers of the old Main Building and, with the tears streaming down his face, saying that he would rather see the old building torn down, its stones scattered to the four winds, and the campus plowed up and turned into a cotton patch than see the University of Texas surrender on a matter of principle.<sup>32</sup>

The meeting broke up in great confusion, and Brady and Woodward, in a restrained statement to the press, simply said that "we were asked to agree that the men ordered removed by the Governor be tried before a picked jury. Common sense, if not fidelity to principle, would render the acceptance of such a proposal impossible."<sup>33</sup> That night Ferguson filed his message and the veto was in effect.

At the same time the temporary restraining order against the regents in the case of John A. Lomax was dismissed by Judge Ireland Graves. But, even though weak in its legal merits, the suit had served the purpose of enabling the Lomax counsel to take a lot of testimony and make it a sounding board for the major issue.<sup>34</sup> The suit became the means by which the issue was spread over Texas, and it crystallized the break in the Littlefield-Ferguson relationship. In the hearing before Judge Graves, Littlefield became the University's leading witness. Frankly admitting the painful and embarrassing position he occupied because of past friendship for

<sup>32</sup> John A. Lomax to J. E. H., January 20, 1939; D. K. Woodward to J. E. H., January 7, 1939; John A. Lomax to Hervey Chesley and J. E. H., February 25, 1940.

<sup>33</sup> *The Dallas News*, June 7, 1917.

<sup>34</sup> *The Dallas News*, July 5, 1917; D. K. Woodward, as cited, Case No. 34, 789, in 26th Judicial District, Travis County, original and amended petitions in John A. Lomax vs. G. S. McReynolds et al; "Stenographic Report," same case, in hands of D. K. Woodward, Dallas, Texas.

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the Governor, he nevertheless supported President Vinson. As for Ferguson's demands that Vinson resign, he said:

"The Governor was asking too much. . . . Dr. Vinson had been elected by the Board of Regents, the Governor had nothing to do with his election, the Board of Regents are the parties to elect your President, and I thought it was just dipping into something that he had no right to dip into, and right at once . . . most any man that had any principle about him would object to it."<sup>35</sup>

Two interesting collateral incidents contributed to their political divorce. Ferguson says that when Littlefield heard that he was proposing Judge Batts for the presidency of the University, the Major, who vigorously disliked Batts, paced into the Governor's office to call him to account.<sup>36</sup> On top of this, Ferguson, in the middle of the battle, committed a serious tactical error. He shifted a large sum of money that the state of Texas had on deposit with the American National—Major Littlefield's bank—to his own bank at Temple. When the call was first made Littlefield was furious. Aside from the fact that any good banker loves a large deposit, Littlefield thought the action implied lack of faith in the security of the depository, and he wrote a "red-hot" letter to the Governor, saying:

"I refuse to be intimidated. I am ready to pay off the deposit at any time."

"He could have," added Ferguson, "and I had no intention of impugning the integrity or resources of the Bank, but I wrote a red-hot letter in answer."<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> "Stenographic Report," as cited, 205-206.

<sup>36</sup> James E. Ferguson to J. F. H., January 23, 1939.

<sup>37</sup> Ferguson, as cited; "Lomax Injunction Suit," Transcript of Testimony, p. 193; D. K. Woodward to J. E. H., January 7, 1939.

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For the University of Texas it was a fortunate clash. It helped swing Littlefield into line.

Thus Ferguson was applying unremitting pressure upon the regents, while the University's defenders were valiantly battling to maintain their minority support on the board. Littlefield came to Vinson's defense in the Lomax injunction suit. And yet Major Littlefield wavered on that difficult line between the strong pull of personal loyalty to the Governor and fidelity to an ideal of institutional independence. Brady called on him at his home on the eve of another board meeting to implore him to oppose the discharge of the faculty members, which issue still hung in the balance. Some University supporters held high hope that he had left the Ferguson fold completely, but at another Galveston meeting of the regents, July 12, 1917, he made it evident that he thought some of the faculty members ought to go.

On that day it became known that Ferguson had withdrawn Dr. Tucker's name as a successor to Dr. Jones on the board, as Tucker was still under the restraint of Judge Graves's injunction, and had appointed one of his own attorneys, John Ward, of Temple, in his place. But the central committee of the Ex-Students' Association was still on guard, and when the regents met, Woodward and Brady were there, too, with a fresh injunction against Ward's serving, and another against Dr. Fly, a confirmed Ferguson supporter, who was enjoined from acting as regent "on the ground that he had vacated his office by accepting a Federal appointment as a physician of the Galveston draft exemption board," and therefore could not properly hold two offices at the same time.<sup>88</sup>

Now Dr. Fly was known by his intimates as a man of

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battle, hot headed and dangerous, and it was testified in court that once in an earlier feverish session of the board when he and David Harrell were at daggers' points, he drew his knife, walked over to Harrell, brandished the blade over his chest, and said:

“I ought to cut your heart out!”

Harrell coolly sat in his seat, looked Fly straight in the eye, and answered:

“You’ve got the knife but not the nerve.”

Thus on the morning of July 12, 1917, fully agreeing with his political leader that the will of the masses should not be thwarted by the injunctive processes of reactionary courts, Dr. Fly showed up at the Galvez Hotel for the regents' meeting. Dressed in a baggy linen suit, he walked in with his right hand thrust deep in his coat pocket, stopped before Woodward and Brady, and with what they assumed to be a gun plainly pointing toward them from his coat pocket, declared his position:

“Well, I may not be a legal member but I guess I’m still a *de facto* member of this board.” And they were bound to admit that he was right.

All went well from then until next morning, when Dr. Fly reappeared in good legal form, having resigned from the draft board and having been reappointed regent by Governor Ferguson, and the board immediately seated him.<sup>88</sup>

It was a significant meeting. The World War was on, and the Federal authorities had advised the board that L. M.

<sup>88</sup> D. K. Woodward, as cited; John Brady, as cited; *The Dallas News*, July 13, 1917; E. C. Barker, *Ferguson's War*, 41-42.

<sup>89</sup> D. K. Woodward, as cited; *The Dallas News*, as cited; Minutes, Board of Regents, Vol. E, p. 64; Barker, *Ferguson's War*, 42.

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Keasbey, professor of institutional history, had taken part in the socialistic Conference for Democracy and Peace, held at Chicago, and was engaged in anti-war activities. Keasbey was dismissed. Littlefield likewise moved the dismissal of W. T. Mather and A. Caswell Ellis. The board followed with R. E. Cofer, G. C. Butte, and W. H. Mayes, with Littlefield in agreement. The board voted a tie on a move to throw out R. H. Griffith, of the department of English, because of a report that he had "led a song in the student parade," with Littlefield voting against his eviction. The board wound up the day's work by dismissing John A. Lomax, with Littlefield, Kelley, Love, and Mathis<sup>40</sup> voting for dismissal, and Brents, Cook, and Jones voting against. Except for the retention of Vinson, it looked like a clean-cut victory for Ferguson as the board continued with its other business.

The appropriation had been vetoed, but Vinson submitted his budget to the board for approval. The reopening of the University in the fall was a matter of grave doubt, but Attorney General B. F. Looney had reviewed the Governor's veto and found that while Ferguson had struck out everything in the bill from page one to twenty-four, he had not—apparently by an oversight—deleted the grand totals on page twenty-seven. He held, therefore, that the Governor "had merely struck out the itemization" and had "permitted the grand totals to remain."<sup>41</sup> This ingenious interpretation cast a bright ray of hope into the gloomy University camp

<sup>40</sup> E. C. Barker, *Ferguson's War*, 41-42; *The Dallas News*, July 14, 1917; Minutes, Board of Regents, Vol. E, pp. 98-105.

<sup>41</sup> *The Dallas News*, June 10, 1917 and H. Y. Benedict, *A Source Book Relating to the History of the University of Texas, etc.*, University of Texas Bulletin, No. 1757, pp. 592-98.

<sup>42</sup> *The Dallas News*, July 13, 1917.

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as the regents turned from dismissing objectionable professors to budgeting the missing funds.

When the question was raised as to whether consideration of the budget was purely academic or not, Littlefield, who had not thought much of the Attorney General's opinion at the last meeting, reassured the board:

"We have a legal adviser, the Attorney General," he said. "It is our duty to go ahead on his advice and rulings. We should proceed as if there were no veto by the Governor, because he says there is none. We ought to go ahead today, consider and adopt the budget. Advertise the opening of the school at its regular time. When the time comes, we will pay the teachers in vouchers and the Comptroller will pay those vouchers, because the Attorney General also is his legal adviser."

Regent Love countered with the argument that the vouchers would be worthless because there was no money in the treasury with which to pay them, and there would be none until the State Tax Board met and set the rate, which alone would determine whether there would be any money or not.

"You need not worry," Littlefield retorted. "The State Tax Board is composed of the Governor, the Comptroller, and the State Treasurer. Two beats three all day long and I have the assurance that the Comptroller and the Treasurer will vote to include the amount. I have it from their own lips."<sup>42</sup> Undoubtedly the Major had won his spurs in politics.

Meanwhile, the fight had become the hottest issue ever dragged into Texas politics, and the state was seething. Mass meetings of a state-wide nature were being held, and Ferguson, confident that "too many people [were] going hog wild

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about higher education," had taken the "issue to the people" with the promise to put the University of Texas, "an educational aristocracy" "controlled by rich men's sons," "into the hands of those in sympathy with our great, toiling masses."<sup>43</sup>

About the time that Ferguson was saying, at Plainview, in West Texas, that his opponents were after him "because I am fighting the fraternities and trying to democratize the University, . . . that the rich man's clubs must go," Will Hogg was saying, at Tyler, in deep East Texas: "After all there is only one issue—shall the present or any other governor boss the Board of Regents and thereby boss the University? Shall the people of Texas submit to the whim of an executive officer, who, to wreak a personal vengeance on six men, usurps ultra-constitutional powers by closing an honored institution."<sup>44</sup>

Meanwhile, Hogg and others were urging F. O. Fuller, Speaker of the House, to call a special session of the legislature to convene August 1, 1917, to consider impeachment of Ferguson. In the end, the meeting was called, a quorum of members met, and Ferguson made it official—thinking undoubtedly that he could control the decision.

The stormy impeachment session followed, and Ferguson went out of office, while Littlefield went out of the state to the LFD ranch in New Mexico to be saved the embarrassment of testifying against the man he had once supported.

<sup>43</sup> *The Dallas News*, June 10, 17, and 19; July 14, 1917; Barker, *Ferguson's War*, 35-37.

<sup>44</sup> *The Dallas News*, June 19, 1917.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### IN BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSITY OF *TEXAS*

THE impelling motives behind a man's action, if known to anyone, are known absolutely only to the man himself. Littlefield was a strong and positive character. Such a man, cold to the casual observer, is often swayed by a deep emotionalism that must, of necessity, be masked from the outside world. He no more boasted his virtues or paraded his charities than he impaired his judgment by sentimental considerations in weighing character and security behind a loan. This does not mean, of course, that he was lacking in civilized impulses, but that with commendable modesty he kept his deepest feelings to himself. He had lost his two children in infancy, and the desire for perpetuity of the Littlefield name must have filled his declining years, even as perhaps the beautiful environment of Austin and his association with the University—an institution built on tradition and for unlimited time—suggested the means of attaining temporal immortality.

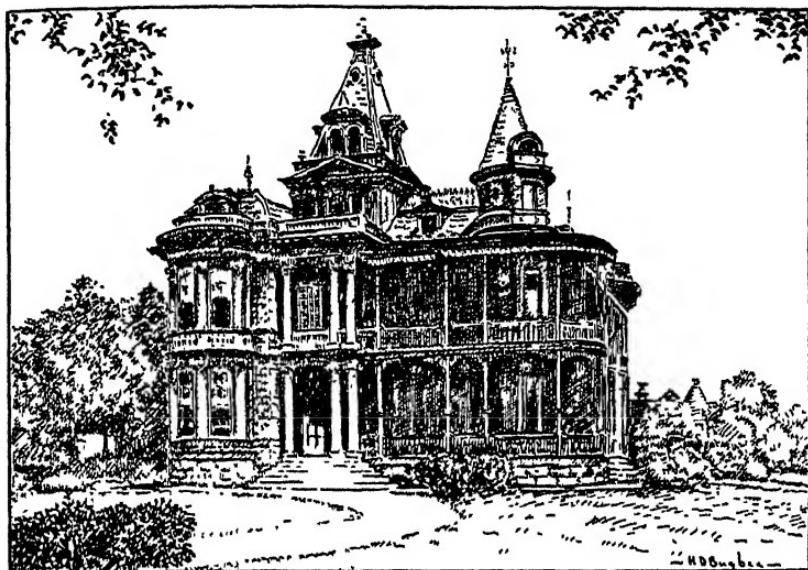
That he was interested in education at an early age is evident from the fact, already observed, that he was financing a grown nephew through Washington College, in Virginia, when he himself was still in his twenties. In 1868 and 1869, when his and Mrs. Littlefield's living expenses were

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only "about one hundred and fifty dollars a year," he was scraping together one thousand dollars to keep this boy in school, while writing him that because of "a total failure in cotton this year . . . I will have to borrow funds to go upon next year. But dont intend to be discouraged. . . . I am determined to give you an education, if you will be sufficiently prudent to obtain one from my scant income. Wont mind runing my credit a little for it, if your conduct is such as to give me encouragement. Act well your part. Frame your character wiseley and honestley and *ever remember* that the success of *all men, & all business & Professions* rests, alike upon *industry, and economy.*"

The year wore out with the fond nephew spending double the amount of his budget. But instead of recognizing an unbalanced budget as a blessing in disguise, as has since been argued on a larger scale, Littlefield wrote:

I will have to recall you. . . . You see from the amount that you have spent that it is almost duble what we anticipated. . . . Now you know that is more style than our means will support. What I have to spare I will give to you as willingly as any one could but John I cant approve of such extravagance as that. . . . I cannot support it I hope you may fully realize the condition we are in and act in a manner that will enable me to continue you at school. You should prize an education above all things now. You know enough about my buisness to satisfy you that I have done a great deel for you, and that it has been all that I was able to do. I did it because I loved you and felt that you had been badly treated by them that should have loved you more than I. And if you will only make use of the bear opportunities that my



"... his red turreted 'mansion' . . ."

limited means permits me to offer, I am satisfied and will feel dubly paid. But if on the other hand you fail to do your part well, and consume the only means I am able to give you before your studies are complete, then John, you and I, to[ o ] will only live to regret it.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout his life, this fatherly concern for the pursuit of knowledge by even his most distant relatives endured. And when he moved to the gentle slope that pitched toward "The Forty Acres" and built his red turreted "mansion" fronting toward town, the University of *Texas*, like an awkward foundling, lay almost in his own front yard. It needed a good deal of nurturing; it needed a lot of help; and long before he was appointed to the Board of Regents its manifest problems began to occupy his mind.

<sup>1</sup> George W. Littlefield to John W. Dowell, September 1, 1868, and June 25, 1869, in Dowell Papers, M. H. Dowell, Luling, Texas.

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His nearest neighbor, unfortunately, was a professor named George B. Halsted, recalled by old-timers as "the most interesting man on the faculty." He was so interesting that he was downright provoking. He believed in no discipline for his children, but allowed them to "express their personality" without let or hindrance. In fact, he was such an interesting example of irresponsibility, even though a professor of mathematics, that he and the Major were bound to clash. Their extended feud was taken up by the Halsted children, who indulged their disdain of the Major by throwing dead chickens and cats over the fence into his yard as they had been wont, in their tantrums, to throw the dinner plates on the dining room floor.<sup>2</sup> Thus the old-fashioned Major's interest in education was stimulated into real concern.

When Thomas Fitzhugh, Latin professor formerly of the University of Virginia, which in the Major's mind was a thoroughly proper place, started agitation for a road through the campus, Littlefield became interested. A meeting was called at his mansion, but, instead of a road through the University grounds, it was decided ultimately to build the peripatos around it, and Littlefield financed this walk at a cost of about eight thousand dollars. Then he helped plant the double row of hackberry trees around it for the delectation of promenading students, and added to their temptation by scattering "over the campus \$500 worth of iron benches," "strongly constructed" and "gracefully" donated by the Major, according to the Minutes of the Board of Regents.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> W. J. Battle to J. E. H., January 5, 1938.

<sup>3</sup> Battle, as cited; *San Antonio Express*, June 4, 1916; Minutes, Board of Regents, University of Texas, Vol. D, p. 390.

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Thus his interest in the institution that was designed to reflect the genius of Texas was fairly aroused by the time Governor Campbell appointed him in 1909 to the Texas Library and Historical Commission, where he became associated with Dr. Garrison, of the University's department of history, and E. W. Winkler, later librarian of the University and the state's unexcelled bibliographer. Before Littlefield's term on this board expired, Governor O. B. Colquitt appointed him to the Board of Regents, January 9, 1911. At that time the appointments of regents were for two years, but in 1913 the terms were extended to six years, with overlapping tenures, and Littlefield drew a six-year term.

By this time, his interest in education, always strong, had matured into a well-rounded plan of personal subsidies. He had sent a teacher from Texas as early as 1887, to the LFD on the frontier in New Mexico for his brother's children; he had, according to accounts,<sup>4</sup> "educated and started in life thirteen nephews and nieces" by 1890, and had eleven others in school. When he went on the board he was supposed to have already educated twenty-nine nieces and nephews, and, it may safely be said, from one important angle at least, that he knew something about education.<sup>5</sup>

In October, 1914, Littlefield was elected chairman of the Board of Regents to succeed Clarence Ousley, "but on account of ill health" declined. While the Ferguson fight was going on, another attempt was made to elect him chair-

<sup>4</sup> "I have to get a teacher for Williams Children in New Mexico" he wrote, "as the one I have there wants to quit. . . . I want to get a Settled woman—no young woman would Suit the place, and an old one would not get along with the children."—Littlefield to Mrs. Lizzie H. Dowell, February 23, 1889, in Dowell Papers.

<sup>5</sup> L. E. Daniell, *Men of Texas*, 352; *San Antonio Express*, June 4, 1916.

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man. After four ballots, in which the Major tied with Dr. Fly, the deadlock was broken by the election of Wilbur P. Allen.<sup>6</sup>

The Ferguson fight diverted the constructive interests of almost everyone concerned with the University into a defensive channel for nearly two years, but Littlefield was maturing some ideas as to its actual needs. In June, 1917, he made it known that he wanted to use the available fund to build dormitories on the campus, and a correspondent for *The Dallas News* observed his interest:

He wants every first year student to live his or her freshman year on the campus at Austin, asserting that they are strangers to Austin and to university life and should have the protection of the university authorities when first they enter school. After the first year, he insists, they are in much better position to care for themselves and will know Austin well enough by that time to select proper boarding places.<sup>7</sup>

This idea found expression later in the Alice Littlefield Dormitory, a \$300,000 home which he provided on the campus for freshman girls. At the same time he was urging an enlargement of "The Forty Acres" by purchase of surrounding lands, and this plan, too, came about after his death.

As was natural with a man of his conservative nature, his original benefactions for the University of Texas were carefully and modestly made. It was entirely characteristic, as well as indicative of an expanding interest, that he wrote Dr. H. Y. Benedict, in 1912, after helping the Y.M.C.A. to get out of debt, advising that organization to "keep in good shape" in the future. After acknowledging a letter from

<sup>6</sup> Minutes, Board of Regents, Vol. D, p. 421, and Vol. E, p. 36.

<sup>7</sup> *The Dallas News*, June 2, 1917.

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Benedict, he added: "I, in all my life, have never connected myself with a proposition that failed. I do not belong to that Association, but I had subscribed to it's building \$4,000.00, and to see it go down to failure, or get tied up so that it's usefulness would be impaired, seemed wrong to me, and as a citizen and well wisher of the University, I felt that I should try to save to the Y. M. C. A. it's building. . . . I trust that they may now and hereafter keep in good shape."<sup>8</sup>

He was feeling his way along the uncertain path of the public benefactor; a path beset by a multitude of importunate crackpots for every individual with a sound proposal for the public good. He was accessible to all, and his portfolio was filled with notes for "loans" to every Confederate veteran who applied to him in need. Some of his associates thoughtlessly said that "he was a sucker" for anybody who had fought for the South. On the contrary, the southern cause was a revered obsession with him, and whoever had worthily shared its wormwood and gall was welcome to his time, his comfort, and his substance.

For years his bent and crippled graying associates in Terry's Texas Rangers had made their way to Austin to hold their reunions, where two Negroes, his own servant, Old Nath, and David Crockett Hill, moved among the veterans with deference, but with an unquestioned air of superiority over other Negroes, for they were veterans, too.<sup>9</sup> And there, while fighting the war all over again, the veterans complained that the textbooks on history were written

<sup>8</sup> G. W. Littlefield to H. Y. Benedict, July 22, 1912, files of the Board of Regents, University of Texas.

<sup>9</sup> Pauline Scott Goldmann, "Letters from Three Members of Terry's Texas Rangers, 1861 to 1865," Manuscript, thesis, University of Texas, 31-32.

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with a Yankee bias; this adding of historical libel to defeat in battle was worse to them than rubbing salt in old wounds.

The state historian of the Texas Division of United Confederate Veterans, reporting to the twenty-first annual reunion in 1912, made particular complaint that "for the fourth time" a Texas textbook law had repeated the requirement that their children study histories following the construction of the Constitution based on Chief Justice Chase's decision in 1868—namely, that the United States was founded on the plan of an indestructible union instead of a union of sovereign states. Further, he contended, this "is not history but bench-made law, made during the reconstruction in violation of all law, and when the South was under military rule." In noting their complaint, E. W. Winkler traced this movement further:

"For the third or fourth time," he said, "John B. Hood Camp at Austin was looked to by their comrades through the State to scrutinize the textbooks in history offered for adoption. The concessions made by the publishers never made the Veterans happy. Instead, they adopted resolutions denouncing partisan, biased and unfair history."<sup>10</sup>

This quite human situation prompted one thoughtful student of history to analyze the cause and to conceive the practical plan by which the grievance might be corrected. On December 5, 1912, Dr. E. C. Barker, of the University of Texas, wrote the one man in Texas possessing both the impulse and the means to remedy the complaint. With characteristic clarity and forthrightness, Barker sketched the cause and pointed out the cure. The best known southern historical collections reposed primarily in the North, he said,

<sup>10</sup> E. W. Winkler, "Historical Agencies in Texas," Manuscript, 9-10.

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and the institutions capable of giving sound training in southern history were likewise in the North.

The accumulation of historical material in northern libraries, [he continued in his letter to Major Littlefield] has attracted to the universities of the North the greatest historical scholars and teachers of America. And the teachers and libraries combined have drawn the students. From the period of the Revolution to the Civil War Yale and Harvard were the finishing schools of educated southern men; and today, nearly fifty years after the close of the Civil War, Johns Hopkins University of Baltimore is the only southern institution whose graduate degrees command the respect of well informed students and scholars. It is worthy of thought that Johns Hopkins University is the offspring of a private benefaction and not of the civic pride of the South.

The historians of the younger generation are honest. Many of them are absolutely without conscious sectional bias. They try to discover the truth and write it fairly and accurately. But the historian must draw his conclusions from the material that he has at hand. Generally he has not the financial means to travel through all the states searching for scraps of information here and there; and even if he has the money to do so he certainly hasn't the time. As a result, he goes to the libraries which have the largest collections and does most of his studying there. . . .

The remedy for the situation is perfectly simple. In the last analysis it is merely a matter of money to collect the historical materials of the South, and time to use them. Until this collection is made the resolutions and protests of patriotic societies against the misrepresentation of the South are "as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals." . . .

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I write this to you because I know your interest in the subject, and because you are a Regent of the University. I believe that there are wealthy men in the South—in Texas—who would be glad to provide the means for making an adequate collection of southern materials, if the matter were properly brought to their attention.

Dr. Barker suggested not only the accumulation of materials, but a professorship of southern history; “and Texas would then begin to remove from the South the reproach of neglecting its own history.”

“Frankly, I hope that this subject will appeal to you.”

The subject as well as the style of presentation did. Major Littlefield asked for an estimate of the cost of the kind of collection Texas should have. Barker prepared his estimate and Littlefield mulled over the idea. Every time anyone raised any sectional criticism of the current textbooks in history, Barker wrote the Major emphasizing the fact that historians were essentially honest, and reiterating the need of compiling the materials of southern history. He canvassed the academic field to find what was being done elsewhere, and cultivated the Major’s interest in the South along the lines of establishing a perpetual monument to himself.

He found that, while the University of Wisconsin was spending about \$8,000 a year on American historical materials, Texas was spending \$500 a year “for books in all fields of history”; North Carolina about \$300 a year on southern history; Mississippi \$400; Georgia and Louisiana “about \$100”; and Florida “\$10 to \$15 a year on American history, and one-fourth to one-third of this goes for material on the South.”

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"I honestly believe," Dr. Barker wrote in March, 1913, "that we have at the University of Texas the opportunity to do for the South and for the nation an invaluable service by gathering the materials for fair and complete study of the history of the South. . . ."<sup>11</sup>

In March, 1914, Dr. Barker wrote Major Littlefield:

It has always seemed to me that a man could build no more conspicuous and useful memorial to himself on a university campus than by endowing a branch of the library. . . . Frankly, I want the library to grow strong in southern history because I realize its importance, and because I should like to see Texas take the lead in studying and writing southern history. I know your interest in the subject, and I hope that as one of the leading and most conspicuous representatives of the South in Texas the memorial idea may appeal to you.<sup>12</sup>

Three days later the Major had decided that:

No one would appreciate the building up of a Southern History collection more than myself. My whole life has been in the South, having given four of the best years of my life for the protection of our Southland. I am anxious to see something done that will begin the foundation for acquiring a history, in which the South may be accorded her just rights. I have been thinking that I would like to have you call at my office some time soon, when we can discuss the best plan of beginning to move in that direction.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> E. C. Barker to Major George W. Littlefield, March 13, 1913, Barker Papers, University of Texas, Austin.

<sup>12</sup> Barker to Littlefield, March 24, 1914, Barker Papers.

<sup>13</sup> Littlefield to Barker, March 27, 1914, Barker Papers.

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At first it was his intention to give \$5,000, and more from year to year if the results justified. A little later he had decided upon \$25,000, to be spread over five years,<sup>14</sup> but Barker convinced him that much more would be accomplished if the fund were turned over to the Board of Regents in trust, with only the income available for a period of years.<sup>15</sup>

Thus sprang and was nurtured the idea that grew into the Littlefield Fund for Southern History that was to make the Library of the University of Texas the outstanding depository for the history, life, and traditions of the Old South. April 24, 1914, Littlefield wrote Clarence Ousley, chairman of the Board of Regents, outlining his gift and the conditions under which it was to be used.

It has long been my desire to see a history written of the United States with the plain facts concerning the South and her acts since the foundation of the Government, especially since 1860, fairly stated, that the children of the South may be truthfully taught and persons matured since 1860 may be given opportunity to inform themselves correctly, and to secure such a history I feel that some one must make the sacrifice to get it, therefore I make the following proposition to you:—

I will give to the University of Texas the sum of \$25,000.00 which shall be known as the Littlefield Fund for Southern History.

This fund was set up, not in cash, but in the form of four vendor's lien notes against lands sold to J. E. White, of Brady, bearing interest at the rate of 6 per cent, and as they

<sup>14</sup> See Barker's notes attached to their correspondence, Barker Papers.

<sup>15</sup> E. C. Barker to J. E. H., January 11, 1938.

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were the last of a series of fifteen, and fell due from 1921 to 1924, they were, he felt, of the essence of security. He gave these because he believed they were "better . . . than cash," and because there "was some difficulty in getting it [the fund] invested for so long a time and in this character of securities."

He named a committee of trustees, made up of H. A. Wroe, of the American National Bank, as chairman, E. C. Barker, vice-chairman, and the state librarian, the University librarian, and the president of the University, or their "successors in office." His letter of transmittal directed the chairman to assist the regents "in keeping the sum as well as possible interest bearing."

"It is my desire," he continued, "that the committee use the income from this fund for twenty-five years to secure such papers and data as are in their judgment needed. At the expiration of that time any part of the principal that may be necessary may be used for the same purpose."

The chairman was charged with making an annual report to the Board of Regents as to the use of the fund, and the president, at the same time, should make an "estimate as far as may be possible of the influence of the collection . . . in stimulating the study of Southern History. . . ."

Copies of their reports were to be mailed to Major Littlefield, "and I ask also that my old comrade Capt. Jas H. Parramore of Abilene, Texas, be served with a copy of the Committee's report as long as he lives."

As to the broad use of the fund, "the Committee is fully empowered to use the fund as their judgment may dictate to purchase books, pamphlets, newspaper files, maps, manuscripts, etc., bearing on the History of the South." Thus it

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was his fond hope, finally, that through the expenditure of this fund "The committee . . . shall endeavor to lay with it the foundation of a collection that shall be of fundamental value for the full and impartial study of the South and its part in American History."

At last, in his letter to the regents, he added, in formal keeping with the ways of the business world:

"I ask you gentlemen to accept this, my proposition, believing it will be of great value to the present and incoming generations."<sup>16</sup> And the regents accepted.

The work of collecting the source materials of history was immediately launched, but the committee soon found that the income from the fund was insufficient to garner the choicest material as it came on the market. This difficulty was taken up with Major Littlefield, who began supplementing the income in order "to get the stuff" the University needed, so that from 1916 until 1920 he had given an additional \$30,566.65 for the purchase of books, pamphlets, newspapers, and so on, "to secure," as he had written, "an Impartial History of our Country."

"I have for years wanted to do that but circumstances were such it was prevented. In doing such I feel it is but just to the cause I gave the best four years of my life to defend, and I feel that I owe such to those patriots who gave their lives to sustain it and for the benefit of the young

<sup>16</sup> George W. Littlefield to Clarence Ousley, April 24, 1914, in Minutes, Board of Regents, University of Texas, Vol. D, 377-78. The original letter to Ousley was dated April 11, 1914, but was revised as to more conservative administration of the fund after an exchange of ideas with Dr. Barker. See E. W. Winkler, "The Littlefield Fund for Southern History," 40-44, Barker Papers.

<sup>17</sup> George W. Littlefield to Mrs. E. C. Barker, May 4, 1914, Barker Papers; additions to Fund, "Statement . . . of the Special Fund for Southern History," by the Auditor, University of Texas, May 4, 1939, Barker Papers.

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people of this time, as well as the generations to come."<sup>17</sup> And thus the sense of obligation to duty became obligation to history and was ultimately to achieve some measure of immortality for them all.

By the terms of his will Major Littlefield added \$100,000 to the principal of his original gift, designated Mr. Wroe as a member of the committee so long as he should live, and left the fund under the sole direction of him and his fellow trustees, consisting, as originally, of the senior professor of history at the University of Texas, the president and librarian of the institution, and the state librarian.

One incident may serve to illustrate how the fund has operated to gather the materials that have made Texas a literary depository for the South, and at the same time clearly demonstrate that private capital and initiative, even in the academic field, are often more effective than state funds. The trustees quickly found that valuable materials came on the market faster than the interest piled up from the original fund. Among the fine collections offered for sale soon after the fund was established were the files of the *Charleston News* and *Courier* for more than a hundred years.

Already the trustees had been buying beyond the returns from the fund with moneys advanced by the Major. He took their notes, at 7 per cent, to be repaid from future income. Then appeared the Charleston papers, which were too good to lose. The librarian of the Newberry Library, in Chicago, examined and made a check list of the files, then owned by the Chamber of Commerce of Charleston, which wanted to get all the money it could for its southern historical heritage. It published a list of the papers and asked for

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sealed bids, instead of sale at auction. The University of Texas was very anxious to get these records from the hotbed of the South. Dr. Barker went to see Major Littlefield.

"Is it good stuff?" the Major asked.

Dr. Barker, undoubtedly just as terse, assured him that it was.

"Then go get it!" the Major directed.

But, with sealed bids, how? Judge W. S. Simkins suggested a way. So the trustees made their bid and sent it to Charleston by E. W. Winkler in person. Their flat bid was \$4,200, and when the Newberry Library bid was opened, it was higher. The Littlefield trustees had expected, or feared, as much, so the simple sentence from Winkler's envelope read:

"We bid \$4,200 and ten per cent above the highest bidder."

The Chamber of Commerce officials were so puzzled that they called in their own lawyer. They were inclined to question the propriety of the bid, but the "ten per cent" overweighed their scruples, and the papers, extending from 1796 to 1910, came to the Littlefield Southern History Collection at the University of Texas. This marked a turning point, too, in the Major's policy. Thereafter he never took a note for his advances; merely told the trustees to draw on him for what they needed,<sup>18</sup> and the collection grew apace.

Thus for more than a quarter of a century the rich increment from one man's loyalty and devotion to a cause that was lost has been piling up, from all corners of the country, in the Library of the University of Texas to detail the ideals

<sup>18</sup> E. W. Winkler to J. E. H., January 14, 1939; Alonzo Wasson in *The Dallas News*, December 28, 1935.

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and the traditions, the loves and the prejudices, the work and the play, the policies and the plans, the glory and the defeat of "our Country." Or, as Littlefield more appropriately put it: "For the full and impartial study of the South and of its part in American History."

More specifically, these accumulations of historical materials are made up of extensive bibliographies—guides to literature in the southern field, books and pamphlets on education, commerce, agriculture, politics, vital statistics, religion, geography, biography, military affairs, reconstruction, and cultural pursuits. They contain vast stores of letters, memoranda, diaries, pictures, maps and other memorials which shed original light upon the people of the South and their private and public affairs.

More importantly, perhaps, the Littlefield Southern History Collection contains hundreds of volumes of newspapers fairly representative of the southern states in the period of the Civil War and the long reconstruction since. The inventory of the collection for 1939 showed 141 volumes of newspapers from Arkansas, 164 from Georgia, 53 from Virginia, 430 from South Carolina, and 322 from Washington, D. C. Besides these, the trustees have ventured outside the South to acquire papers from Boston, Cincinnati, Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia, for the period 1820 to 1880 for their reflection of news and views from and upon "the South and its part in American history."<sup>19</sup>

Thus, through Major Littlefield's provision, the Littlefield Southern History Collection contained, at the time of

<sup>19</sup> For details, see Winkler, "The Littlefield Fund for Southern History," as quoted; and E. C. Barker to C. D. Simmons, October 26, 1926; and E. W. Winkler to E. C. Barker, October 10, 1928, all in Barker Papers.

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his death in 1920, somewhat more than 11,000 volumes. By 1939, however, it consisted of 18,559 books and 7,246 pamphlets, or a total of 25,805 volumes, and in addition tens of thousands of manuscript documents, such as letters, business papers, and scribbled memoranda, and hundreds of additional volumes of newspapers. Besides all these original materials, thousands of pages of typescripts of interesting documents, and, lately, more tens of thousands of microfilm copies of all sorts of rare materials—especially plantation documents—have been added to the Littlefield Collection.<sup>20</sup>

Hundreds of research students in general literature, government, history, folklore, and other subjects have mined its rich accumulations of the years. Special articles and books have been written from it, and an increasingly large number will be written in the future. A ten-volume history, written by outstanding southern scholars, is in preparation. It was begun under the editorship of the late Professor Charles W. Ramsdell and will be continued under the direction of a member of the University of Texas faculty and the Trustees of the Littlefield Fund, in co-operation with the Louisiana State University. It is hoped that this work, judged by the most critical standards, may fulfill the founder's wish. The Littlefield Chair of Southern History is yet to be established.

The twenty-five year limitation upon the use of the principal of the original gift has passed, and it is natural to inquire about the present principal of the original and supplementary gifts. Notwithstanding the large accumulations in the Littlefield Collection in the University of Texas Library, it is pleasing to note that the principal is larger than the original donations. For the capital fund, the University received

<sup>20</sup> Winkler, "The Littlefield Fund," etc., as cited, Table 1.

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\$125,000 from Major Littlefield; by October 31, 1938, it had spent \$101,896.96; and yet in 1940 it had a capital fund of \$146,368.26.<sup>21</sup> It has been a trust well kept, and its inherent value will be enhanced by the proper pride of southern people as time lays a gentler mantle over the memories of the past.

While the Littlefield Southern History Collection, the nearest and dearest to the Major's heart, was his most significant benefaction, there were many other gifts of note. When the John Henry Wrenn Library of rare and beautiful literary pieces was placed on the market in Chicago, Littlefield sent President Vinson and Dr. Barker to buy it. Wrenn had spent a lifetime and a fortune acquiring the rarest items of English literature of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Major Littlefield paid \$225,000 for the collection, adding \$5,000 "to pay for the installation of an artistic ceiling" in the Wrenn Room. In striking contrast to the musty and significant volumes that make up the working collection of southern history, the handsomely tooled gilt covers of the Wrenn Library constitute the show place of the University Library, where every passer-by can at least stop, catch his breath, and admire. It consists of nearly six thousand volumes dating from about 1500 to the time of Wrenn's death in 1918.<sup>22</sup>

As Dr. R. H. Griffith, of the University of Texas, has pointed out, it is "a collection of rare and beautiful and great books which . . . several other universities strove hard to

<sup>21</sup> E. C. Barker to Max Skelton, February 19, 1940, in Barker Papers.

<sup>22</sup> This library has been the subject of so much literary comment, especially in *The Alcalde*, *The Daily Texan*, and the press of the state, that every Texan who reads knows its story. See *The Dallas News*, January 22, 1928; *The Daily Texan*, April 5, 1935; Minutes, Board of Regents, University of Texas, Vol. E, pp. 150-51.

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secure," worth at least three times what Major Littlefield paid for it—"a superb donation . . . whose value will go on increasing. Three hundred years from now the gift will still be lauded as an 'unspeakable benefit.' "<sup>23</sup>

After giving the Wrenn Library, Major Littlefield's interest in the future of the University rapidly enlarged. In his will, the provisions of which will be subsequently noted, he provided for an "arch" or monument to southern heroes on the University campus, and set \$200,000 aside for the purpose. He provided \$300,000 for the Alice Littlefield Dormitory for freshman girls, and gave and designated the land upon which it should be built. He left half a million dollars to be applied to the Main Building; he enlarged, as we have seen, his Fund for Southern History; and finally, he threw his home, subject to Mrs. Littlefield's life interest, into the lap of the University. And with his substance he left his views, which, as Dr. Vinson explained, were strong if often inarticulate. Among them was his conception of what the school itself should be.

Much can be said of the University as a universal institution. Yet it was Littlefield's conviction that the University owed its primary allegiance to the soil that supported it—that it should be representative of the history and traditions, the life and attitudes, the ways and customs—in a word, the culture—of its own land. Undoubtedly he was right, and hence he gave generously of his time and means in behalf of "The University of Texas."

<sup>23</sup> Reginald Harvey Griffith, *The Great Torch Race*, 1920. See Frederic F. Norcross, *John H. Wrenn and His Library*, 1933, for a sketch of the collector and his work.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### AND LAST—"IT IS MY WISH"

**N**O document among the tens of thousands he was responsible for preserving so thoroughly illustrates the measure of Littlefield's character and mind as his last will and testament. His careful regard for a future that he would not share, his concern for the many children who were nearest to being his own, his loyalty to people and to province, his hope for the perpetuity of the story of the South, his desire for the immortality of the Littlefield name, and his refusal to risk anything of his own, even after he was dead, to the faulty judgment, frailty, perverseness, or cupidity of others—all of these are illustrated in this remarkable document.

Major Littlefield had an abhorrence of failure. He had never in all his life, as he wrote Dr. Benedict, connected himself "with a proposition that failed." Money making was more than acquisitive business; it was to him the symbol of success. By his own standards, personal debt was to be shunned like the plague, but conservative and constructive credit was to be turned to his own account. He often had from eight hundred thousand to one million dollars on deposit in his personal account, but the first provision of his will, of course, required the payment of all his debts at once.

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His last will, modified by two important codicils, was written July 1, 1918, and, in the way of a superlatively careful man, he provided in its preamble that "should this will for any reason fail to take effect," that written February 17, 1912 should "take effect," and then "in the event both . . . should for any reason fail to take effect," that executed April 20, 1911 "shall take effect." After what thus seemed a cautious start, he provided for his debts; and then to his brother William P. Littlefield, a lovably irresponsible character of Kenna, New Mexico, he provided that \$1,000 be paid on January 1, and July 1, of each year "during his natural life." These payments, however, should "not be subject to . . . any debt or demand against my said brother, and the money shall be paid to him in person in cash if necessary to insure his receiving the benefit thereof." Besides this, there were bequests to this brother in cattle and land and a cancellation of all indebtedness to the benefactor. Next, his executors were to pay Mrs. M. M. Harral, of Gonzales, another relative, an even larger amount semiannually "during her natural life."

Third on the list was his faithful body-servant. "I direct my executors to pay my old war servant Nathan Littlefield Stokes the sum of two dollars each Saturday night during his natural life; also to provide him with a home in which to live either by permitting him to use some property belonging to my estate or by renting a suitable home for him and paying the rent out of the property of my estate. . . ." Besides, he bequeathed Old Nath the perpetual rent from a cottage, and "all necessary living and medical expenses" should these provisions "not be sufficient." It is scarcely necessary to observe that there was significance—the under-

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standing of Negro character—in his change from semiannual to weekly payments.

Old Nath properly introduced, for in a measure he symbolized, the next subject in his will—the South. He added one hundred thousand dollars to his historical fund, "for the purpose of . . . the preparation and publication of a History of the United States with the plain facts concerning the South and Her acts since the foundation of the Government, especially since 1860, fairly stated in order that the children of the South may be truthfully taught and persons maturing since 1860 may be given the opportunity to inform themselves correctly concerning the South and especially of the Southern Confederacy."

After the history was published it was to be sold, the proceeds invested, "and the income used to establish and maintain a chair of American History in the University of Texas." But in the maturing of the idea of a southern memorial he had concluded that this was not enough, and the design to perpetuate the heroes of the South seems uniquely his own.

To the Trustees of the University he directed the payment of two hundred thousand dollars

to erect a massive bronze arch over the south entrance to the campus of the University of Texas. . . . On the top of the arch, I wish them to place a life size statue of Jefferson Davis, the President of the Southern Confederacy, to his right and below him I wish them to place a life size statue of General Robert E. Lee, Commander of the Army of Virginia, to the left of President Davis and below him . . . I wish them to place a life size statue of General Albert Sidney John-

ston, Commander of the Army of Tennessee. Under General Lee I wish them to place a statue of John H. Reagan, Postmaster General of the Confederacy, and below the statue of General Johnston a statue of James S. Hogg, the people's Governor of Texas. The space in the center between the two driveways can be filled as the committee [the Board of Regents] deems best.<sup>1</sup>

"At some prominent place," he directed, should be the inscription "built and donated to the University of Texas by George W. Littlefield." No visitor to the campus, having read these provisions of Major Littlefield's will, would immediately recognize the memorial, for there is no arch. Apparently he anticipated that the plans and tastes of others might not be in complete agreement as to the form, and so he left a full measure of flexibility in the arrangement. For while he "suggested [the plan] to the committee as being the best; however, they are authorized to change it or the design as they wish, giving prominence however to the statues of the men named above."

Then he added a frugal man's warning: "I believe the work of constructing said arch should not begin earlier than *three* years after the termination of the present war with Germany<sup>2</sup> unless prices of material are reduced to a fair level prior to that time." This too, however, was left discretionary. In proper time, the memorial was built, with the figures in heroic instead of "life size," and with the addition

<sup>1</sup> Major Littlefield envisioned this memorial at the time when the campus was open to a driveway from the south. The drive circled past the old Main Building, and returned to the exit at the south, forming a narrow-mouthed U. It was this mouth—"the space in the center"—which he left to be filled in "as the committee deems best." This plan was modified by the regents.

<sup>2</sup> This was written in July, 1918.

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of a figure of Woodrow Wilson, spectacles and all;<sup>3</sup> and the regents "filled in the space between the two driveways" with Pompeo Coppini's Memorial Fountain.<sup>4</sup>

Returning to the will, it was Major Littlefield's wish that \$250,000 be paid the University of Texas for a dormitory for the "Freshman Class of Young Women," to be built upon lots donated by him, and as a memorial to his wife, Mrs. Alice T. Littlefield. It was his belief that "work of construction . . . should not begin earlier than two years after termination of the present war with Germany unless prices of material are reduced to a fair level prior to that time." The trustees, through a flexible provision, increased the amount by fifty thousand dollars.

Meanwhile, President Vinson's agitation for the removal of the University to the Brackenridge tract along the river had stirred the town as well as University supporters throughout the state. Major Littlefield was bitterly opposed for at least two reasons, and he simply did what he could to scotch such future disturbances by providing that the dormitory be built on his lots and then deeded to the University,

such deed to provide that the property shall revert to my estate if the Main University shall within 21 years after my death be changed from its present location near my home in Austin, Texas. Such deed shall state that branches of the University may be established and maintained elsewhere, and that if

<sup>3</sup> The spectacles were too neat a challenge to some sophomore prankster, and have long since gone the way of all dust and world peace proposals.

<sup>4</sup> This gift was tendered before Major Littlefield's death. See Minutes, Board of Regents, University of Texas, Vol. E, p. 312, and *The Alcalde*, (Austin, Texas), Vol. X, p. 1513.

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sufficient ground for construction of buildings cannot be secured in the present location, such ground may be secured or used elsewhere in Austin, Texas, but that the present campus or any available ground in the neighborhood thereof must be utilized so far as is consistent with the space available before any buildings for the Main University are constructed elsewhere on penalty of such reversion.

After thus apportioning his estate, the residue was left to his wife, his executors to act for her if agreeable to her, and "manage the property belonging to her and operate her interest in the Yellow House Ranch." In case it "should ever be necessary to have guardians for her person or estate appointed," he continued, it was his "wish" that J. Phelps White, H. A. Wroe, and Whitfield Harral should "be appointed as joint guardians of her person and estate or either as the case may be."

No security or bond was to be required of his executors, who were to be paid a fixed annual salary "in lieu of all compensation, fee or commission provided by law." It was his will "that no action shall be had in" any court in this or any other state relative to settlement and administration other than simply "the probating of this will and the return of an inventory, appraisement and list of claims of my estate." His executors were granted "absolute dominion" over his properties, to handle "all in the same manner that I could do alive."

A lengthy set of conditions provided what should be done if his wife did not survive him, and then he launched into detailed bequests, principally to nephews and nieces. In some cases he set up trust funds for long duration, continu-



*J. Phelps White*

ing even to the grandchildren of the beneficiary. In another case he bequeathed farm lands, not in outright gift, but also in trust, with a provision that if the recipient "shall not desire himself to cultivate said land," his executors should do so by renting it, and pay the net income to a nephew, such income subject to no previous debt against his beneficiary. The farm was to be held in trust and passed on to the man's children, and his grandchildren, when the "trust shall terminate."

He provided handsome bequests for J. Phelps White, Dr. Whitfield Harral, George T. Littlefield, Mrs. Elizabeth French, and various members of the Dowell and White families, all without visible sign of sentiment until he came to

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"James R. Key and his children by his first wife, Lula Harral Key.... Jim has been a good husband and father and I want him to share equally with said children." The bequest was \$140,000.

"I give and bequeath to Miss Selma Lindblad, who has been the nurse and constant companion of my wife the sum of fifty thousand dollars," contingent upon her staying with Mrs. Littlefield the balance of Mrs. Littlefield's life.

For another niece he provided one hundred and fifty dollars a month from the time of his death until 1933, upon condition that she maintain her residence in California. Should she move from that state for longer than three months at a time, then "no further payment shall be made." But if she suffered the penalty of residence the allotted time, then a legacy of twenty thousand dollars was to be paid her.

That he felt it incumbent upon men to provide amply for the women in any wise dependent upon them may be deduced from the fact that, at first, he arranged, if Mrs. Littlefield did not survive him, to leave his residuary estate to a host of women relatives. He wanted \$140,000 each given to Mrs. Georgia Cole, Mrs. Elizabeth French, and Mrs. Ida W. Walker, with the income from a parcel of real property to Mrs. Mildred F. Boone during her life, and the property "to her descendants." The residue, including seven hundred thousand dollars worth of bonds the American National Bank had paid for the Littlefield Building, should, with the above conditions, be divided between Mrs. Boone, Mrs. Pearl White Wroe, Miss Libbie White, Mrs. Alice M. Daniel, Mrs. Christine L. Buford, Mrs. Sarah W. Murphy, and Miss Mary Harral.

The Yellowhouse ranch should, he thought, in case Mrs.

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Littlefield died first, he operated for five years after conclusion "of the present war with Germany," and in no case longer than eight years after his death, with J. Phelps White as manager. Then it should be liquidated, after which "One million dollars of the proceeds of the sale of such land and other property not otherwise disposed of shall be donated to the Board of Regents of the University of Texas" to be used for a Main Building. And again he hedged against the threat of removal of the institution to Brackenridge land, or any other. The Main Building, he specified, is "to be constructed on the campus of the said University and nowhere else. . . . This gift is made on condition that the Board of Regents shall pass a resolution that the location of the University shall not be removed from its present position in the City of Austin, Texas."

Then he added: "It is understood that such a resolution on the part of the Regents would probably not be binding, but I believe that if they pass such a resolution and accept this gift their successors and the people of this state would feel themselves morally bound thereby."<sup>5</sup>

In a codicil of October 14, 1919, Major Littlefield revised some of his bequests, and added a personal note amending a provision in the will directing his wife to erect a monument over his grave. He declared this provision "inoperative, but I suggest to her that she have my wishes in this matter carried out. This is only a request and she can do as she likes."<sup>6</sup> That, in itself, was a nice human touch.

<sup>5</sup> This chapter is based primarily upon the copy as recorded in Probate Papers No. 5220, Travis County, Austin, Texas, entitled "Estate of Geo. W. Littlefield, Will," under date of July 1, 1918.

<sup>6</sup> "Codicil No. 1 to Last Will of Geo. W. Littlefield," Probate Papers No. 5220, as cited.

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November 9, 1920, shortly before his death, he revised his will by a second codicil, allowing fifty thousand dollars more for the Alice Littlefield Dormitory if the first bequest "be not sufficient." He willed his big red house to the University "after the death of my beloved wife." He revoked his previous provision of a million dollars "and other property" from the Littlefield ranch to the University, and made it "the residuary legatee of my estate only," "provided it not exceed \$500,000," for a Main Building.<sup>7</sup>

And now, after having educated a host of relatives and others, after providing generously for their future, and after making noble contributions to the promotion of education generally, the thirty-sixth paragraph was a fair indication that he had looked back upon his work and expected it to stand.

"I make this will," he concluded, "feeling that I am dealing fairly and justly with my relatives herein mentioned, and with the express demand and condition that if any of the beneficiaries hereunder is dissatisfied and contests the probate of this will, or does anything, or in any way encourages others to do anything to prevent the probate of this will or the realization of all my wishes as herein expressed, then I hereby will and direct that such person or persons shall forfeit his or her interest in my estate as provided in this will with like effect as if such beneficiary's name had not been mentioned herein."

Thus at last the stern will of the disciplinarian and the good hard sense of the man of affairs asserted itself, even as, in another case, he directed that his estate should be settled

<sup>7</sup> "Codicil No. 2," etc.

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as directed "in spite of and notwithstanding any rule of construction to the contrary."

He died November 10, 1920, and at last the body of this Texas plantation boy, Confederate soldier, trail driver, banker, cowman, lay in state in the Wrenn Library, and was buried in the family lot in the cemetery at Austin. An appropriate monument was erected above him, and Mrs. Alice Tiller Littlefield, who survived him many years, and Old Nath, his body servant, finally came to rest on either side of him in keeping with his last wish—in the way of the South; in the soil of the South.



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### *The Author*

J. EVETTS HALEY is the author of two classics of the range: *The XIT Ranch of Texas* and *Charles Goodnight, Cowman and Plainsman*, but his absorbing permanent interest is the raising and marketing of cattle. In one capacity or another he has been connected with the cattle business all his life. His address is Spearman, Texas, and his mailbox is fourteen miles from his ranch, but unlike a baron of the open range, he does control all the land that lies between.

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